

HARVARD PLAYS

The 47 Workshop



Fourth Series


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PLAYS OF THE
47 WORKSHOP

FOURTH SERIES

EDITED BY
GEORGE P. BAKER

THE HARVARD PLAYS

A Collection of One Act Plays

SELECTED AND EDITED BY PROF. GEORGE P. BAKER

Vol. I. Plays of the 47 Workshop, 1st Series

THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE, by Rachel L. Field.

A fantasy, including a dance, for 4 men, 3 women, 1 child; 35 minutes.

THE GOOD MEN DO, by Hubert Osborne.

A drama on Shakespeare's death, costume, for 3 men, 3 women; 30 minutes.

TWO CROOKS AND A LADY, by Eugene Pillot.

An exciting crook play, for 3 men, 3 women; 20 minutes.

FREE SPEECH, by Wm. Prosser.

An amusing satire, for 7 men; 20 minutes.

Vol. II. Plays of the Harvard Dramatic Club, 1st Series

THE FLORIST SHOP, by Winifred Hawkridge.

A comedy, for 3 men, 2 women; 45 minutes.

THE BANK ACCOUNT, by Howard Brock.

A drama of modern life, for 1 man, 2 women; 25 minutes.

THE RESCUE, by Rita C. Smith.

A drama of New England life, for 3 women; 40 minutes.

AMERICA PASSES BY, by Kenneth Andrews.

A pathetic comedy, for 2 men, 2 women; 30 minutes.

Vol. III. Plays of the Harvard Club, 2nd Series

GARAFELIA'S HUSBAND, by Esther W. Bates.

A drama of New England life, for 4 men, 1 woman; 30 minutes.

THE FOUR-FLUSHERS, by Cleves Kinkead.

A satirical farce, for 3 men, 2 women; 30 minutes.

THE HARBOR OF LOST SHIPS, by Louise W. Bray.

A tragedy of Fisherfolk, for 2 men, 1 woman, 1 boy; 25 minutes.

SCALES AND THE SWORD, by Farnham Bishop.

An exciting drama of social justice, for 6 men, 1 woman, 1 boy, refugees and militiamen; 25 minutes.

Vol. IV. Plays of the 47 Workshop, 2nd Series

THE PLAYROOM, by Doris Halman.

A touching fantasy, for 2 men, 2 women, 2 children; 30 minutes.

THE FLITCH OF BACON, by Eleanor Hinkley.

A lively comedy, costume, for 5 men, 1 woman; 20 minutes.

COOKS AND CARDINALS, by Norman C. Lindau.

A farce-comedy, for 3 men, 2 women; 25 minutes.

TORCHES, by Kenneth Raisbeck.

A tragedy, costume, for 2 men, 2 women; 1 hour.

Vol. V. Plays of the 47 Workshop, 3rd Series

THE CROWNEST, by Wm. F. Manley.

A war play for 3 men; 15 minutes.

THE HARD HEART, by M. A. Kister, Jr.

Tragedy for 6 men, 2 women, 1 child; 25 minutes.

MIS' MERCY, by Louise Whitefield Bray.

Drama of the sea for 2 men, 2 women, 1 youth; 20 minutes.

THE OTHER ONE, by Arthur Ketchum.

Hobo drama for 3 men; 20 minutes.

Vol. VI. Plays of the 47 Workshop, 4th Series

THE STRONGEST MAN, by Elizabeth Higgins Sullivan.

A tragedy for 3 men, 2 women, 1 boy; 35 minutes.

THE SLUMP, by Frederic Lansing Day.

A tragedy for 2 men, 1 woman; 25 minutes.

THE MOURNER, by James Mahoney.

A sprightly comedy for 3 men, 1 woman; 25 minutes.

BROTHERHOOD, by William H. Wells.

A drama for 9 men; 20 minutes.

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FOURTH SERIES

THE STRONGEST MAN

By ELIZABETH HIGGINS SULLIVAN

THE SLUMP

By FREDERICK LANSING DAY

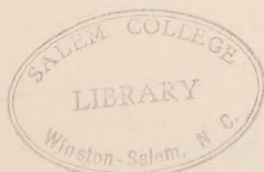
THE MOURNER

By JAMES MAHONEY

BROTHERHOOD

By WILLIAM H. WELLS

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THE STRONGEST MAN

BY

ELIZABETH HIGGINS SULLIVAN

CHARACTERS

JEAN BAPTISTE BEAUSÉJOUR

CELESTE, *his wife*

ANGELIQUE, *his aunt*

FELIPE, *his brother*

GABRIEL LANGLOIS

A BOY

SIX NEIGHBOR WOMEN

First produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club at Agassiz House Theatre January 25 and 26, 1924.

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THE STRONGEST MAN

TIME: *Present. The afternoon.* PLACE: *A shrimp-canning village near New Orleans.*
PEOPLE: *Cajans, or Cadians.*

NOTE: *The Cajans of the Gulf Coast are descendants of French settlers who were banished by the English from Nova Scotia in 1755, the Acadians of Longfellow's Evangeline. Although their hearth tongue is gombo French, they are perfect masters of a fluent and expressive English. They speak rapidly, taking great pains to make themselves clear, swinging back on relatives with numerous pronouns and defining phrases. They are especially careful in regard to persons and time, a precaution which leads them into reiteration that is delightfully naïve and picturesque. The player, taking a Cajan part, may do well to make no effort at Cajan pronunciation—the syntax a Cajan gives his English is distinction in itself. However, here are a few hints for the actor of grounded prejudices for realism:—speak as if playing a French-Cadian rôle, but remember that the Cajan has come under the softening southern influence. Never is not nevaire, but nevva. Father is fodda; mother, mudda; neither, needa. Initial “h” is either dropped, or has “y” for a substitute. A word ending in two consonants is sure to have the final one dropped, as, kind is kin'; told, tol'; husband, 'usban'.*

THE STRONGEST MAN

CURTAIN rises on a parlor furnished in bad taste with an extravagant effort for grand effect.

Open door at center back, giving on a gallery (porch).. The gallery may be best suggested by a back drop, painted to give the impression of a trellis with flowering vines. The windows on each side of the door should have lace curtains and side draperies and lambrequins as fringed and ornate as possible and without an evident effort for a general color scheme for the setting.

The door at lower left is also open. This door is draped with a rope portière, much looped and tasselled.

A portrait of a moustached man should stand on draped easel in the upper left corner of the room, or hang in honored place on the left wall. Two divans should be included in the furnishing; one at center right; the other, up left, near the back wall.

A mantel, or a bookcase, about stand against the right wall, up back.

Down right is a small table with a smoking set. The mantel, or cabinet, up right, should be cluttered with bric-a-brac, including a vase, filled with joss-sticks. A fancy hearth-broom and dust-pan should be by the mantel, also an ornate wastebasket.

Angelique, neatly dressed in a cotton frock with white apron studying the effect of the divan at center right. She changes its position several times and stands back to decide.

The click of the gate takes Angelique's attention from the divan and she stands, listening to

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voices, not the least pleased at the prospect of callers.

Three women, all chattering, come upon the gallery. A young mother, in a blue dress, is pushing a baby-buggy. The other two, in red and green dresses, wait until the brakes are set on the buggy.

RED DRESS	}	[together, standing in the door at center back] Good day. 'Ow you do, Angelique?
GREEN DRESS		
BLUE DRESS		

ANGELIQUE [*curtly, making a pretense of adjusting the "tidies" on the divan*] I verra busy, these afternoon. [*The women look inquiringly at one another. The Red Dress tosses her head and crosses the threshold. The Blue and the Green Dresses follow the Red into the parlor.*]

ANGELIQUE [*going to the mantel and readjusting the bric-a-brac*] I ent got no time for talk. [*Points to the clock on the mantel.*] It most time now for Jean Baptiste an' Celeste to git back from N'O'leans.

RED DRESS [*after a significant glance to the other two*] Look like you expec' company, uh?

ANGELIQUE. Who have tol' you that?

GREEN DRESS. Nanette Peteau. She say that Gabriel Langlois come, these afternoon, for little visit.

ANGELIQUE [*turning around, facing the company*] Verra little visit — from one train to nex' train.

BLUE DRESS. 'Ow you know Gabriel Langlois come? He write letter?

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ANGELIQUE. Yes.

RED DRESS [*significantly*] To Celeste?

ANGELIQUE. Yes. Gabriel Langlois write letter to Celeste.

BLUE DRESS. An' Jean Baptiste ent 'fraid to let Celeste see Gabriel Langlois, uh?

ANGELIQUE [*advancing a step*] No, Clarisse, my nephew, Jean Baptiste Beauséjour, ent 'fraid nothin' in these worl'.

GREEN DRESS [*playfully nudging Blue Dress*] Clarisse, you talk like you been old maid, you! No 'usban' is comin' be 'fraid for old sweetheart to see his wife after he been marry to her for fourteen year.

[*While the three women are laughing, a new caller, an Orange Dress, comes upon the scene, hurriedly pushing a baby-buggy past the door. In another moment, she reappears in the doorway, breathless, suggesting fear that she has missed something.*]

ORANGE DRESS [*crossing the threshold, center back*] O, Angelique! [*After raising her hands and dropping them dramatically.*] That Nanette Peteau is makin' the big talk on the Bayou, these afternoon.

RED DRESS [*Hurrying to be the first to impart the news—with some effect at a lowered tone*] That all true what Nanette is tellin'. Celeste git letter, these mornin'; an' Gabriel Langlois is comin' back.

ANGELIQUE [*catching what the Red Dress has said*] Nanette have the long tongue, her.

RED DRESS. Maybe: but, when have there been

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such news as these on the Bayou St. Ange? [*Holding up her hands.*] To think that Gabriel Langlois been, for sixteen year, just so like dead to the Bayou; an', these day, now, he come back an' see Celeste! [*To the very evident annoyance of Angelique, the Red, Green and Blue Dresses seat themselves.*]

ORANGE DRESS [*looking out the window at right back*] Oh, here come Marie Benoit! An' ol' Grandmere Laballiere been with her.

GREEN DRESS. Ha, ha, Grandmere! She ent goin' miss nothin'.

ANGELIQUE. Ah, that ol' one an' her deaf ear—she git to hear more than all the Bayou to-gedda, her!

[*The Orange Dress stands at the door, center back, to receive the latest comers. The gate clicks. A Brown Dress and an Old Woman in widow's weeds appear. The Old Woman carries an old-fashioned ear-trumpet and seems very much troubled at missing anything that may be said.*]

ORANGE DRESS [*taking a step outside the door in her eagerness*] Marie, that been all true what we been tol' by Nanette Peteau.

BROWN DRESS [*into the ear-trumpet as they enter the parlor*] Yes, Grandmere Laballiere, that been all true, what Nanette been tellin', these afternoon.

BROWN DRESS [*to the company in general*] Nanette Peteau been sayin' that . . .

ANGELIQUE [*interrupting*] People talk too much. [*Sets herself.*]

BROWN DRESS [*after seating the Old Woman*

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and herself in the divan, center right] An' what you expect', Angelique? Ent Celeste once been promise to Gabriel Langlois? Ent they been goin' marry, that time, then, sixteen year 'go, goin' have weddin' after Easter? Course, people goin' talk! [*Red, Green, Blue, and Orange Dresses all speak at once, each asking Angelique a different question.*]

ANGELIQUE [*rising, her hands to her ears*] Try to talk, one to the one time; then, maybe, I know what you been tryin' to say to me.

RED DRESS. An' Jean Baptiste ent mad that Gabriel Langlois is comin' back?

ANGELIQUE [*loftily, seating herself*] Jean Baptiste is glad that Gabriel Langlois come back. He say he like to show Gabriel Langlois one good time, these day, after he been gone sixteen year from the Bayou.

BROWN DRESS. An' I be surprise, these day, if Gabriel Langlois take the good time from Jean Baptiste? If I been Gabriel Langlois, these day, I would not shake the hand of that Jean Baptiste, the hand that have beat him, three time, most to death; an', then, sixteen year 'go, drive him 'way from these Bayou an' marry Celeste, Gabriel's girl, himself.

ANGELIQUE [*bridling*] Marie, are you try for pass the bad word on my nephew, Jean Baptiste Beauséjour?

BROWN DRESS. No, no, Angelique—I only been say 'ow I feel if I been Gabriel Langlois, these day.

RED DRESS. Why you think Jean Baptiste be

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so glad for Gabriel Langlois to come back, these day, to the Bayou?

ANGELIQUE. Jean Baptiste ent mean man, not when he been have his own way.

BLUE DRESS [*archly*] An' you think Jean Baptiste ent 'fraid that Celeste, maybe, care some yit for Gabriel Langlois, uh?

ANGELIQUE [*rising, very angry*] You talk, jus' so like fool, Elise; like always, you! Celeste ent goin' forgit that Jean Baptiste is rich man [*with sweeping gesture*], that he own all on these Bayou. Celeste ent fool, not like somebody else. She got these grand house, these lovla furn'ture, silk dress, gold ring, wrist-watch, di'mon' lavalier, an' aut'-mobile for ride in. [*Through the door at lower right, a telephone is heard ringing.*]

GREEN DRESS [*interrupting, to Angelique*] Tel'phone ring.

ANGELIQUE [*continuing, as she crosses to lower right*] What you expec'? Celeste love her husband. [*Exit Angelique, leaving the door open. The telephone is evidently not far from the door. The women hush to listen.*]

ORANGE DRESS [*sidling to door at lower left*] Sish! [*She puts her left fore-finger to her lips and motions for silence with her right hand. The Green Dress edges in, behind the Orange Dress, her hand to her ear.*]

BROWN DRESS [*to Orange Dress*] Who have call Angelique up, now?

ORANGE DRESS [*prudently moving a step farther from the door, her tone lowered*] I don't know. [*The Green Dress touches the arm of the*

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Orange Dress and whispers something in her ear. The women watch the eavesdroppers in rapt attention.]

ORANGE DRESS [*taking two steps farther from door*] It been Jos'phine Dufour. [*Steps back to her listening-post.*]

BLUE DRESS. Jos'phine Dufour! 'Ow kin Nanette Peteau have gone that far, so quick as these?

RED DRESS. She got the quick foot, her.

OLD WOMAN [*appealingly*] What have Angelique been sayin'?

BROWN DRESS. Angelique ent tol' us, not much. She jus' say Jean Baptiste is glad for Gabriel Langlois to come back to the Bayou. She say Jean Baptiste want to show Gabriel one good time.

OLD WOMAN. Oh, that Jean Baptiste! He is the proud one, these day, for Gabriel to come back an' see him one rich man.

BLUE DRESS [*walking, taking an admiring survey of the room*] An' Jean Baptiste kin be proud, him! To live in these grand 'ouse! Such lovela furn'ture! [*Pauses before the portrait.*] An' these picture, so magnificent — jus' to look at it once, you know it been Jean Baptiste!

ORANGE DRESS [*deserting her post, hurrying to the Old Woman*] Grandmere Laballiere, they been talkin' 'bout you, in there, Angelique an' Jos'phine Dufour.

OLD WOMAN. What they been sayin' 'bout me, uh?

ORANGE DRESS. That you talk too much.

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GREEN DRESS [*through her cupped hands, taking a step farther from the door*] Angelique tell Jos'phine that nobody mind what ol' Grandmere Laballiere been sayin' 'bout Jean Baptiste an' Gabriel Langlois.

RED DRESS. You hear that, Grandmere Laballiere?

OLD WOMAN. I ent hear nothin' — tel'phone too far 'way.

[*Curiosity now overcomes the Blue Dress and she tip-toes to the door, lower left. Angelique, holding the receiver to her ear, looks through the rope portière and sees the eavesdroppers. She responds by slamming the door on them. The Orange Dress, who has been holding a whispered conversation with the Brown Dress, looks up and, seeing the door is closed against Angelique, raises her voice.*]

ORANGE DRESS [*continuing, to the Brown Dress*] That been bad fight, then, sixteen year 'go, when Jean Baptiste lick Gabriel Langlois till he mos' kill him.

BROWN DRESS. But Gabriel didn't act 'fraid of Jean Baptiste, not nevva. My Ignace see that fight, then. An', when Gabriel Langlois been knock down for las' time an' not able to git up no mo', Gabriel tell Jean Baptiste that he been one big brute. He say to him that, maybe he git Celeste to marry him yit; but he ent nevva, not Jean Baptiste, goin' make no woman 'appy in these worl', not Celeste, not nobody.

OLD WOMAN [*catching the last speech*] Ha, ha! An' these is why Jean Baptiste is so glad,

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these day, for Gabriel Langlois to come back an' see these grand 'ouse an' the big business on the Bayou.

BROWN DRESS [*contemptuously*] An' 'ow Jean Baptiste make these big business, uh?

GREEN DRESS. Jus' cause he been one big brute, like Gabriel Langlois tol' him. Ent we all know, 'ow, twelve year 'go, Jean Baptiste tell those fishermen on Lake Salvador that they mus' not sell they shrimp in N'O'leans no mo'—that they mus' sell to him, Jean Baptiste! He been stronges' man on the Bayou, by Gar, he say; an' he knock they block off it they ent goin' sell to him—an' nobody else. Jean Baptiste git rich, him—cause he been one big brute.

BLUE DRESS. I always 'ave think Celeste ent nevva love that Jean Baptiste.

ORANGE DRESS. But ent she marry him? Ent she been good wife for fourteen year to Jean Baptiste?

BROWN DRESS. An' she better marry that Jean Baptiste, her, or she been ol' maid now. Jean Baptiste ent let no odda man git Celeste when he want her, himself, for wife.

OLD WOMAN. He always git what he want, that Jean Baptiste.

BROWN DRESS. Yes, he git what he want—he git Gabriel Langlois' girl—an' he git the shrimp of Lake Salvador for can an' make the fert'lize.

OLD WOMAN. Ah, an' the pride he 'ave in his heart! But, you see, the good God will punish him yit for all these pride! [*During the speech*

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of the Old Woman, Angelique opens the door without being observed.]

ANGELIQUE [*confronting the women*] Ta, ta, ta; cha, cha, cha; talk, talk, talk! Jus' like flock black-birds, you! Too much talk! Like fool Cajans, always! [*Angelique crosses to the window at right back. In her progress, she gives an impatient look at each occupied chair.*]

ANGELIQUE [*looking out the window upon the gallery*] Therese, you better look to yo' kid out there. He been half fall from his buggy.

[*Blue Dress makes hurried exit.*]

ANGELIQUE [*after a second look upon the gallery*] An', Phronie, yo' kid been eatin' his shoe. [*Exit Orange Dress. A baby's cry is heard.*]

RED DRESS. That kid like the taste his shoe.

ANGELIQUE [*turning on the Red Dress*] Douquette, the postman jus' stop at yo' 'ouse; he been leave letter in yo' box. [*After a depressed round of "good-byes," the Red Dress makes her exit. The Green and Blue Dresses rise uneasily.*]

ANGELIQUE [*going to the mantel to consult the clock*] It pas' time now for Jean Baptiste an' Celeste to git back from N'O'leans. [*The Brown Dress nudges the Old Woman. The Old Woman shakes her head and holds her chair.*]

GREEN DRESS [*laughing ironically*] Well, I guess, Angelique, that I save you trouble for think the good excuse to git me 'ome. [*Taking arm of Blue Dress.*] We go now, us. Good-bye.

ANGELIQUE [*gratefully*] Good-bye. [*To Brown Dress and Old Woman.*] Good-bye. Good-bye.

BROWN DRESS [*getting uneasily to her feet*]

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We mus' go, now, Grandmere Laballiere. [*As if she considers her guests dismissed, Angelique crosses to lower right and concerns herself with the rope hangings of the portière.*]

OLD WOMAN [*to Brown Dress, as they pass out, center back*] You wait; Jean Baptiste be punish yit. [*Exit Brown Dress and Old Woman. Angelique begins readjusting the divan, center right, paying particular attention to the "tidies."* An automobile horn is heard. Angelique runs to the door, center back.]

VOICE [*outside*] 'Ere, Felipe, you damn fool, you; ent you nevva able remember, like I been tol' you? [*A short pause.*] Well, you better, you.

ANGELIQUE [*taking a step out on the gallery*] Oh, Celeste, such lovla cape! Fit for queen! Oh, such hat! Such plume! Beaut'ful! Magnificent! [*As Celeste comes up to her.*] Jean Baptiste sure been grand 'usban' for you, Celeste Beauséjour. I 'ave think, maybe, he buy you grand thing, these day, but nothin' so like you got now. [*As they both come into the room.*] 'Ow much they cost, uh?

[*Celeste is slender, fragile looking, and pretty. She is as indifferent as Angelique is enthusiastic, especially in regard to her new clothes. She is wearing the best that the New Orleans department stores are selling today, a plumed hat, an evening cloak, and an elaborately embroidered afternoon gown. As her costume has been chosen by Jean Baptiste, the good taste of the ensemble may be questioned.*]

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ANGELIQUE [*helping Celeste off with her hat and cloak.*] What they cost, them?

CELESTE [*without the least interest*] I don't know.

[*Enter Jean Baptiste, big and burly, a swaggering fellow, well pleased with himself. He is dark, with plenty of color in his face and a tinge of dunnish red in the black of his assertive moustaches. His chin is slightly cleft, and his eyes are marked with jetty lashes and heavy brows. The cut of Jean Baptiste's coat and trousers is indifferent—he is more concerned with the accessories of his dress. His hat is a Stetson; his cravat, gay colored; the open waistcoat, lavishly embroidered; and his shirt is of striped silk. Behind Jean Baptiste, comes Felipe, his brother, a willing and adoring minion. Felipe carries a standard lamp, a suit-box, and several packages. The lamp has a brass frame and a very ornate shade of fringed and bright hued silk. Felipe sets down his burdens in the corner, left back, and stands, awaiting Jean Baptiste's further commands.*]

ANGELIQUE [*holding out the cloak to get the sheen of its silk*] An' you say, Celeste, you ent remember what Jean Baptiste pay for these?

JEAN BAPTISTE [*turning upon Angelique in irritation*] What it matter, what I been pay? I make, these day, twenty thousan' dolla on the fert'lize. You talk, Angelique, like I been yit one poor fisherman on Lake Salvador, glad for make fifty cent for day. Look like you been 'sleep for las' ten year, uh?

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ANGELIQUE. I ent mean no 'arm, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Well, you better not, you. [*Takes up the sleeve of her dress to investigate the fabric of the garment she is wearing on a day like this.*] What you mean, wear dress, like those, these day, when Gabriel Langlois come back to the Bayou? [*Throws off her arm in disgust.*] Those dress, he is not silk!

[*The all-attentive Felipe gets a gesture of command from Jean Baptiste. At the signal, he opens the suit box and hands Angelique a frock of gaudy silk. After giving Angelique the dress, Felipe makes himself busy in gathering up the tissue-paper wrappings and carrying them and the box off stage. He presently returns and takes up his position of gentleman-in-waiting.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*to Angelique as she holds the dress, admiring it*] 'Ere, you put him on, those dress I buy for you, N'O'leans. [*Laughs.*] An', maybe, you wan' know what he cost, uh? [*A short pause.*] Well, it been forty-nine dolla an' ninety-eight cent. [*Exit Angelique with dress. Celeste takes her hat and cloak and starts to follow the aunt out of the room.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*stopping his wife*] Where you take those, now?

CELESTE. I put these in my armoir, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*taking the hat and cloak from her*] They been plent' time for those to go in yo' armoir.

[*Jean Baptiste looks about the parlor and*

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seems to decide upon an over-stuffed armchair at left back. He arranges the cloak over the chair, careful to throw back a fold to reveal the fine lining of the garment. Then, he shakes out the plume of the hat and sets it on top of the cloak. This done, he makes another gesture to Felipe. Felipe in answer takes a pair of long, white kid gloves out of an envelope wrapper and hands them to his brother. The wrapper is carried out by Felipe, who promptly returns, to wait further orders. Jean Baptiste takes special care to lay the gloves over the cloak, showing them to their best advantage. While the husband is engaged at his proud task, Celeste takes matches from the smoking-set and lights a joss-stick in the vase on the mantel.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*looking up from the display on the chair*] What you do that for, Celeste? They ent no mosquit, these day.

CELESTE. I burn these for kill the stink from the fert'lize fac'ry, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*sniffing the air*] Yes, he been purt' strong, these day.

CELESTE. I nevva, nevva like for smell the stink of the fert'lize.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*amused*] 'Ow kin I can the shrimp an' make the fert'lize—an' please yo' nose, same time, uh? If the good God been want the shrimp of Lake Salvador to smell like the sweet bay flower, He would have made them so.

CELESTE. I don' think Gabriel like these stink, needa.

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JEAN BAPTISTE [*bridling slightly*] So, it is for Gabriel Langlois you make these trouble, uh?

CELESTE. The Bayou smell like sweet bay flower when Gabriel go 'way, that time, then, sixteen year 'go, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*hotly*] An' what been here, then, that time, sixteen year 'go?

[*In silence, Celeste lights the second joss-stick.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*answering himself*] When Gabriel Langlois go 'way, then, that time, sixteen year 'go, they been, on these Bayou, only poor Cajan fishermen, glad for make fifty cents for day. An' what he find, now, these day, when he come back, uh?

[*Jean Baptiste pauses, looking hard at his wife. She keeps her shoulder toward him and lights another stick.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE. Jus' so! Gabriel Langlois come back, these day, after sixteen year; an' he find Cajan money in the bank, N'O'leans. Yes, an' good clo' on Cajan back; plent' food in Cajan belly. An' who for thank for these good thing that come to the Bayou while he been gone, uh? [*Celeste lights another stick.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*hands on his breast*] I be thank for all these, Jean Baptiste Beauséjour, stronges' man on the Bayou, me, by Gar. [*Touches his biceps.*] Stronges' 'ere. [*Touches his temples.*] Stronges' 'ere. [*Walks to chair by table at lower right and takes a big, black cigar.*] They kin not cheat me, needa. [*Lights cigar.*] Those big business men, N'O'leans.

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[*Sets himself.*] If they been any cheatin' done [*between puffs*], Jean Baptiste do it, himself.

[*During her nephew's speech, Angelique, in her new dress, slips into the room and joins Felipe. They stand in rapt admiration of the head of their house.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*blowing smoke after a few moments of reflection*] An' they been glad, those big men, for shake my 'and an' have drink with me, anytime. [*Blows a dense cloud.*]

FELIPE [*enthusiastically, to Angelique*] Jus' see! Who kin make the smoke like that Jean Baptiste? You think one big steamboat been over there, uh?

JEAN BAPTISTE. You 'ere, Felipe?

FELIPE. I been 'ere, all time, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Well, you better make those lamp connec'; an' be damn quick, you.

[*Felipe, Angelique attending, begins to connect the standard lamp with the electric equipment of the room. Jean Baptiste shows impatience by snapping his fingers for them to hurry. When the lamp is properly adjusted, Jean Baptiste crosses the room and admires its fringe and ornamentation for a few moments before turning on the light.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*addressing his wife by the mantel*] You think, Celeste, Gabriel Langlois yo' 'usban' now, he kin give you lamp, so like these?

[*At a nod from Angelique, Felipe leaves the parlor in his aunt's company. Celeste makes no*

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reply to her husband's question; but she crosses the room and makes a movement to turn off the lights.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*staying his wife's hand*] What you think you been doin', uh?

CELESTE. I turn him off, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. He stay burnin', jus' like I turn him on; ondastan'?

CELESTE. It is a sin to make such waste, Jean Baptiste, to burn the 'lectriss, these sun-bright day.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Why you bodda for the waste? Jean Baptiste Beauséjour' wife kin burn the 'lectriss for all day, if she wan'.

CELESTE. But I ent nevva wan' to make the waste. [*The telephone is heard ringing through door, lower left. Jean Baptiste answers the call. Through the rope portière, his loud voice is plainly heard.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*at the telephone*] Grégoire, that you, uh? This is me. . . . Jus' so. . . . You be sure that Clement ondastan' that he must make all the gas-boat whistle, so like hell, these day, after Gabriel Langlois have come to these 'ouse. You tell Clement be sure to make the big noise, like Day of Judgment, the ten boat, all to-gedda. . . . An' you, Grégoire, you keep the two fac'ry chimney smokin' so half the sky be blacker the devil, these day. . . . Do like I tol' you, these mornin'. . . . Well, you better.

[*While Jean Baptiste is at the telephone, Celeste leaves the room. She returns directly with a white muslin apron which she puts on. The*

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apron has a bib and ruffled shoulder straps. The apron donned, Celeste takes the hearth-broom and a piece of paper and brushes about the carpet around the lamp.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*as he comes through the rope portière*] You take him off, those apron.

CELESTE [*throwing unnecessary energy into her brushing*] But, when Felipe make these lamp connect', he make little muss. I git it clean first. These dress is so beaut'ful, I be 'fraid for git him dirty.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*returning to his chair and cigar*] What I care you git him dirty? I buy you anodda. [*Celeste crosses the room, drops the paper into the waste-basket and sets the hearth-broom back in place.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*forgetting the apron in the seriousness of a new thought*] You look like you been starve, Celeste. When you goin' git fat, you?

CELESTE. I don' know, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You mus' eat mo'. You on-dastan'?

CELESTE. I ent blame I be so thin, Jean Baptiste. I try for eat, evera day, jus' so like you wan' me.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You better, you. 'Ow it look for me, for Jean Baptiste Beauséjour have for wife only thin woman on the Bayou?

CELESTE. I be sorry, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*softening*] Come 'ere. [*She comes to him. He makes her sit on the arm of his chair, taking her hand and holding it out to ad-*

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mire the glints of the stones in the setting of her rings.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*after admiring a diamond for some moments*] You think 'bout Gabriel Langlois, some time, uh?

CELESTE. Some time? Yes, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You remember what Gabriel Langlois say to me when we been 'ave las' fight togedda?

CELESTE. Yes, Jean Baptiste, you tol' me that, many time.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*deeper, lower tone*] Yes, that I ent, nevva, nevva, in these worl', be able to make you 'appy; that I ent man to make no woman 'appy. He tell me I been one big brute, me.

CELESTE. Yes, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You 'spose Gabriel Langlois yo' 'usban' now, he kin give you 'ouse, so like these?

CELESTE. No, Jean Baptiste, I ent 'spose he kin.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You think he give you aut-'mobile, grand lim'zine car, for ride in, maybe?

CELESTE. No, not that, needa, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You verra 'appy, Celeste?

CELESTE [*colorless voice, expressionless face*] Oh, I be 'appy 'nough, Jean Baptiste.

ANGELIQUE [*racing into the room*] Gabriel Langlois come now.

FELIPE [*a few steps behind Angelique*] Gabriel Langlois come now.

[*Celeste rises and stands at center left, her*

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hands hiding themselves under the bib of her apron. Jean Baptiste stalks about the room, very grandiose of manner in this great hour of his life. As he circles back to his chair at lower right, Felipe comes up to him.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*taking Felipe's hand*] My ten twelve-man gas trawl-boat in the Bayou, my two fac'ry, my 'ouse; an' evera Cajan for mile an' mile 'round here workin' for me an' make the good money. Felipe, I think now that I been workin' sixteen year for these day to come. What you say, uh?

FELIPE. I be proud man, Jean Baptiste, proud for been yo' brudda. All yo' brudda, Grégoire, Justian, Alcée, Pierre, Clement, an' Sebastian, all be proud the name Beauséjour, these day.

[Gate is heard clicking. The room comes to attention. Two figures, a man and a boy, appear at the door, center back, the boy half a step in advance of the man. The stranger is neatly dressed in black with the empty sleeve of the right arm pinned to his breast. He seems of finer clay than the others with a certain air of distinction and dignity. Slender, white-haired, and pale cheeked, he makes a clashing contrast to the ruddy, stalwart Beauséjour brothers. The Boy is all alert and takes on a certain air of importance; yet, he is a little uncertain. It is evident that he does not like this strange house and has his own suspicions of its master. The man stands in calm expectancy; withal, slightly nervous.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*at first sight of the pair in the doorway*] Entrez; come in, you. [*The Boy takes*

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two steps into the room. With his hand on the Boy's shoulder, Gabriel follows.]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*coming forward, holding out his hand*] Ah, M'sieur Langlois, you been so change, I almos' not know it been you at first! Well, 'ere you are, after sixteen year! 'Ow you do? Good-day. I be glad for see you. [*Gabriel makes no sign, neither of seeing nor hearing Jean Baptiste.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*taken back at supposed rebuff*] Ah, come Gabriel, be good sport! Bygone been bygone for long time, now. I glad for see you. We shake 'and, uh?

BOY. He does n't hear you, Mister. He's deaf and blind.

[*Beauséjour steps back, as if struck in the face. Angelique crosses herself, edging toward Celeste.*]

BOY [*looking closely at both women*] It is best not to get him fussed-up. An' don't take on over how bad you feel for him. He just can't stand that. [*Into Gabriel's hand, the Boy taps with the tips of his fingers, light, rapid movements. Gabriel bows his head in answer.*]

BOY. Can't none of you talk like this, the one-hand manual alphabet? [*Angelique, Felipe, and Jean Baptiste shake their heads in negation. The Boy taps again. Gabriel bows his head and is led to the divan, center right, and seated. Felipe and Angelique step toward Langlois.*]

BOY [*waving them back*] Don't all come at him at once. Don't get him excited. If he can take it easy, sometimes, he can read people's lips; but not many.

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GABRIEL [*rising nervously*] Celeste? You here in this room? [*The Boy seats Langlois, tapping into his hand again.*]

GABRIEL [*in a low voice, to the Boy*] Jus' Celeste, nobody else.

BOY [*speaking to the women*] He thinks he can read Miss Celeste's lips. But you've got to go at it easy.

ANGELIQUE [*grabbing the Boy and shaking him in her excitement*] 'Ow it 'appen, M'sieur Langlois git blin' an' deaf an' lose one arm, all same time, uh?

BOY [*to Celeste, trying to shake off Angelique's hold*] I reckon you're the lady he's come to talk to.

[*Jean Baptiste lights cigarette, greedily inhaling its smoke. Celeste sways on her feet, but does not stir from where she stands.*]

ANGELIQUE [*Clutching harder at the Boy*] 'Ow M'sieur Langlois git, so like I see him, now?

CELESTE [*taking a few faltering steps and falling on the floor before the divan*] Oh, Gabriel, that I 'ave live to see you so! I wan' die. I wan' die, now.

[*Angelique, quick to preserve the honor of the house of Beauséjour, is instantly on her knees beside the prone figure of her nephew's wife. She holds Celeste back, keeping her from crawling to Gabriel's feet. As Celeste fell, Jean Baptiste made a dash forward; but, seeing his aunt is mistress of the situation, he halts, keeping his dignity intact. The Boy stands by Gabriel, watching Jean Baptiste with alert, suspicious eyes.*]

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ANGELIQUE [*raising the prostrate woman to her knees*] Celeste, don' you forgit, like these, that you been marry; you been Madame Beauséjour. For shame for you — an' Jean Baptiste is lookin' at you, these minute!

CELESTE. I ent care for nothin' no mo'.

[*Celeste sobs, trying to get away from Angelique. After a short struggle, she desists and sobs upon the aunt's broad bosom. Angelique breaks into sudden weeping. Jean Baptiste keeps smoking. The Boy circles around the two women, much perturbed.*]

BOY [*to Celeste*] It ain't goin' to do no good to carry on like this.

ANGELIQUE [*to Boy, her tears drying in a sudden sense of wrong*] Why ent M'sieur Langlois write in the letter to make us prepare for these?

BOY [*to Celeste*] You're just wastin' time. Uncle Gabe's come a long ways to see you. He's only stayin' off between trains, and just wants a little talk with you.

ANGELIQUE. 'Ow kin he talk with her when he been deaf, uh?

BOY. Ain't I said that he thinks he can read her lips?

CELESTE [*sobbing*] 'Ow kin I speak to my Gabriel — an' see him, now, like these? [*Shudders and hides her face on Angelique's breast.*]

BOY. He's stoppin' off for nothin', if you keep this up.

ANGELIQUE [*checking her own sobs, and drawing out her scapulars*] 'Ere, Celeste, the Blessed Rita. She git you compose. [*From a pocket in*

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her scapulars, Angelique takes a small leaden image which she gives to Celeste. Celeste takes the image in passionate devotion.]

ANGELIQUE [*continuing*] The holy Rita, saint of the impossible, she 'elp you now. [*Crosses herself.*]

BOY [*interrupting*] Better help you soon, lady — Uncle Gabe is gettin' uneasy.

GABRIEL. Celeste? Celeste?

BOY [*to Celeste*] Say something to him. Say you're glad he's come this long way to see you. [*Celeste kisses the image and immediately gets a hold on herself. She rises resolutely and seats herself by Gabriel.*]

CELESTE [*taking Langlois's hand and laying his fingers against her lips*] Gabriel, you know this is me, Celeste?

ANGELIQUE [*clutching at the rope portiere and drowning Langlois's answer to Celeste*] Oh, such a sad sight to come to the Bayou. [*Breaks into violent sobbing.*] That the good God forgit Gabriel like these! [*Sobs again. Then ten gas-boats in the Bayou begin to whistle.*]

ANGELIQUE [*in the first lull in the whistling*] What good for Clement make all these noise? Gabriel kin only hear by finger on the lip. [*The boats blow their second salute.*]

ANGELIQUE [*in the next lull*] An' you kin not put no deaf man finger on the whistle of the ten gas-boat in the Bayou. [*Sobs.*]

[*Boats give their third and last salute. Gabriel, who has been speaking to Celeste throughout the din, is heard again when the whistling ceases. His*

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voice, low pitched, should give the suggestion of carrying to the audience only when the stage is silent of all other sound.]

GABRIEL. That is what I 'ave feel in my heart, all these time, that I could read yo' lip, Celeste.

[While Langlois is speaking, Jean Baptiste, circling around the pair and watching them narrowly, makes his way to Angelique and Felipe at lower left.]

ANGELIQUE *[striking a tragic attitude, watching Gabriel, her louder voice taking the stage]* To 'ave to live an' not able to see, to 'ear nothin'! *[Sobs.]*

JEAN BAPTISTE *[roughly shaking his aunt's arm]* Langlois ent blin'. He ent deaf. You been fool, these day, you. *[Felipe chuckles, quite convinced by his brother's statement.]*

JEAN BAPTISTE. Gabriel Langlois 'ear that I git rich while he been gone. *[To Felipe.]* He is the sly one, that Gabriel. He don' want me to find out that he know I got these fac'ry, these big business, these boat, these 'ouse? *[Motioning the boy to come to him.]* Come 'ere, you, kid. *[To Angelique.]* You jus' see me, now; I soon find Gabriel in his little trick. *[To the Boy, angry at his tardiness to obey.]* Ent I tol' you to come 'ere? *[The Boy hangs back, half suspiciously.]*

JEAN BAPTISTE *[in a roar of harsh command]* Come 'ere, kid, like you been tol'. *[Still more angered at the Boy's delay.]* Don' you 'ear me, or 'ave you got deaf in yo' ear, too?

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Boy [*defiantly*] No, I ain't. And you don't need to holler at me, neither.

[*On the divan, Celeste and Gabriel seem engrossed in a happy conversation that is drowned down in Jean Baptiste's loud voice. The Boy tries to communicate with Langlois, but is very gently, but firmly, pushed away. It is very evident that the old lover wants no interruption.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE. Come, 'ere. [*The Boy goes to lower left, careful, however, not to get within arm's reach of Jean Baptiste. At a nod from his brother, Felipe gets the Boy by the shoulder and pushes him to Jean Baptiste's grip. Jean Baptiste seizing the Boy roughly, in a tone of gruff cross-examination*] Where you live, kid, uh?

Boy. I hear you without you hollerin' at me, like that.

JEAN BAPTISTE. I been askin' you where you live.

Boy. With Uncle Gabe.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Why you say *Uncle Gabe*? M'sieur Langlois ent got no family in these worl'. I know that — he, one time, live on these Bayou.

Boy [*determined to keep up a brave face, his voice a little shaky*]. It ain't nobody's business what I call him. He's adopted me.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Why he 'dopt you, uh?

Boy. Because he was my pa's friend, I reckon.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Where yo' pa now?

Boy. Got blowed up in the explosion that near killed Uncle Gabe — if you want to know so bad.

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[*At the word explosion, Jean Baptiste gives a slight start. Angelique and Felipe exchange glances.*]

JEAN BAPTISTE [*showing sudden excitement*]
What kin' explosion?

BOY. Munition plant, during the war. [*Jean Baptiste forgets for the moment to keep his hold on the Boy.*]

ANGELIQUE [*seizing the Boy as he tries to pass her*] 'Ow M'sieur Langlois live? He blin', not 'ear, an' 'aff blow up.

BOY [*insolently*] Uncle Gabe ain't holdin' out his hat to nobody. He gets his pension from the munition company; and he's got a store, too.

ANGELIQUE. What he sell in these store?

BOY. Sells flowers—and minds his own business.

FELIPE [*seizing the Boy by the other shoulder*]
An' makes the good business, uh?

BOY. Sure! Wish I could smell his flowers, this minute! Gee, how this hole stinks! Don't it make you all sick to your stummicks to smell it?

JEAN BAPTISTE [*dragging the Boy from Angelique's hold*] You think, kid, M'sieur Langlois read my lip, uh?

BOY. Don't reckon he can.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Why you think he kin not?

BOY. You talk too loud. Your mouth is too big. You get too fussed-up when you talk.

JEAN BAPTISTE. But, if I try 'ard for make him ondestan'?

BOY. Reckon that will only make it worse. He can read only the lips of a few people; those, who

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talk easy and quiet-like, just the folks he likes to be real, good friends with.

JEAN BAPTISTE. You better know who you been talkin' to, now. [*Shakes the boy.*] Ent you been learn 'ow to act polite, uh? [*Shakes him again.*]

BOY [*recovering his breath, a suggestion of angry sobs in his voice*] You big stiff, you ain't goin' to try any rough stuff, like this on me and get away with it! [*Angelique pats her nephew's shoulder and whispers something in his ear.*]

GABRIEL [*his voice heard in the lull*] I 'ave nevva know a spring that 'ave so many pitcher flower as that spring, Celeste.

CELESTE [*against Gabriel's finger*] Yes, I remember.

GABRIEL. I kin see the Bayou now, like it been, that time, then — all gol' an' *pourpre*, Celeste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*forcing a piece of paper money into the boy's hand*] Ah, come, now, kid; you an' me be good friends, uh? I ent want 'urt you. I jus' git excite, some time.

GABRIEL [*while Jean Baptiste is silent*] An' I often think, me, that I been 'earin' that mockin' bird agin, Celeste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*releasing the Boy to give an illustration of the manual alphabet*] You say to M'sieur Langlois on his 'and, like these. [*Imitates the Boy's communication with Gabriel.*] You say to him, like I tell you, now.

BOY [*dropping the money and getting clear of the Beauséjours*] I ain't goin' to, neither. Uncle Gabe didn't come here to talk to you. [*Exit Boy*]

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to the gallery. Celeste's laugh is heard, a clear, girlish ring.]

ANGELIQUE. Name of God! I ent 'ear Celeste laugh, not for sixteen year.

GABRIEL [*going on with his story*] An', then, the turkey, I catch him, so; an' hol' him, jus' like these. You remember?

CELESTE. Yes; an' 'ow we all laugh, those day, at that turkey, Gabriel. [*Laughs again.*]

ANGELIQUE. Look at Celeste! She got red in the cheek, an' bright in the eye. You 'ardly know it been her, sittin' there.

FELIPE [*much disgusted*] That ent no joke for make such laugh—to catch the turkey an' hol' him. Gabriel talk like fool. He always been fool, that Gabriel Langlois!

JEAN BAPTISTE [*fiercely, to his aunt and brother*] You shut yo' mouth in yo' face, bodda you! [*Quick exit for Felipe, followed by Angelique. Jean Baptiste circles around the divan, watching his wife and Langlois.*]

GABRIEL. Yes, we got our mem'ry, Celeste. I think, often time, that is the bes' we kin 'ave in these worl', the mem'ry.

CELESTE. An' it is the one thing, the only thing, that nobody kin git from us, the mem'ry.

GABRIEL. Maybe, you think I ent remember 'ow you look, those day. I remember, me, jus' 'ow you been dress—little white muslin dress with ruffle. [*He lifts the ruffle of the apron strap.*] Little dress, like you be wearin' now. [*Holding the ruffle a little higher.*] Muslin dress, ent it, Celeste?

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CELESTE. Yes, Gabriel, it be muslin.

GABRIEL. I remember, me, those white dress, Celeste. An', jus' think — I come back, after sixteen year; an' find you ent change, needa you, needa yo' kind dress. Jus' the same, like you been when I go 'way.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*with rapid strides to reach the divan*] No, Langlois, by Gar, she been change! [*Jerking the ruffle from Gabriel's fingers.*] Those ent no muslin dress she got on, these day. Those only damn apron she wear over silk dress that cost seventy-five dolla. What you think — my wife kin only 'ave muslin dress?

GABRIEL [*utterly unconscious of Jean Baptiste and his outburst*] I bet you wear him yit, the necklace of the tear of Job. [*Langlois's fingertips go lightly over the bib of the apron, just failing to search high enough to touch the diamond lavalier.*]

GABRIEL. I remember him, those necklace.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*gripping his wife's shoulder*] Tell him you got di'mon' lavalier. What matter with yo' tongue, uh?

GABRIEL [*sentimentally*] Yes, we been 'ave our mem'ry, me an' you, Celeste.

JEAN BAPTISTE. What kind mem'ry you been talkin' 'bout, uh?

CELESTE [*rising and putting herself between the two men*] Jean Baptiste, for love the Blessed Mudda, you ent goin' 'urt Gabriel, not agin! [*Laying her hands against his breast to hold him off.*] Jean Baptiste, please — jus' say to me you won'.

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JEAN BAPTISTE. An' those mem'ry — what they been?

CELESTE. Jean Baptiste, ent you see it don' matter what they been — ent you see Gabriel ent nothin' mo' 'n a soul not in heaven yit?

GABRIEL [*unaware of any disturbance*] Celeste? Where you now? [*Celeste reaches back, giving Gabriel's shoulder a reassuring pat. She does not shift, however, in the bar she has made of herself between the two men.*] I ent be surprise if you got him yit, the tea rose I plant for you, those Christmas Day.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*thrusting the woman to one side and slapping Langlois's hand upon his moustached lips*] Langlois, these is me, Jean Baptiste. An' I tell you we do mo' than plant the tea rose on the Bayou, these day.

GABRIEL [*reaching out, expecting to find a hand held out to him*] 'Ow you do? I be glad meet you. [*Finding no hand, Langlois runs his fingers over Beauséjour's breast and up to his face, feeling Jean Baptiste's cheeks*] Ah, ah, Jean Baptiste, it be you!

JEAN BAPTISTE. Yes, by Gar, it is me!

GABRIEL. I ent ondastan' you, Jean Baptiste; but I know you by feel the face.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*forgetting to replace Langlois's fingers on his lips*] It's me tells you, Langlois, you nevva know these Bayou, if you been 'ave yo' eye-sight, these day. You nevva know it been St. Ange no mo'. I build new wharf, all prime cypress timber with cre'sote pier. I got twelve-man gas trawl-boat, ten boat, for sein the shrimp,

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all mine. Eight year 'go, I put up big cannin' fac'ry for can the shrimp; an', five year 'go, I put him up, nodd a fac'ry, for make the fert'lize.

GABRIEL. I know, by yo' face, you 'ave the good health, Jean Baptiste. That is nice, the good health.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Course, I got the good health. Busy man, healthy man.

GABRIEL. I be glad for talk with you an' read yo' lip, Jean Baptiste. But I ent able. I kin read only few lip. I, old dog, me, for learn new trick.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*taking Gabriel's hand and roaring against it*] I tell you I got the big business. Those fool Cajan fishermen, that, one time, been glad for make fifty cent for day, I lick them so, twelve year 'go, that they git 'fraid for work for nobody but me. They now been glad I lick them so, that time, twelve year 'go, like I tell you now. They git five dolla for day—I pay them so, jus' like that. I pay five dolla for day on boat, for sein the shrimp, for work in fac'ry. You ondastan'?

GABRIEL [*mystified, but bravely determined to hold up his own end of the conversation*] I 'spose you ent got no gray hair yit, Jean Baptiste. An' 'ow the fishin' been, since I been gone, uh?

JEAN BAPTISTE [*roaring still louder*] I ent fisherman, me, no mo', I been tellin' you. I got ten gas-boat, twelve-man boat, for sein the shrimp.

GABRIEL [*feeling Beauséjour's chest*] An' you been gittin' fat, too. But you got healthy job, Jean Baptiste, fishin' all day in open boat on

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those lake. An' don' you nevva, like me, git you job in the munition plant for the explosion to blow you up, like you see me now. [*Laughs at his little joke on himself.*]

CELESTE [*laying her hands appealingly on her husband's arm*] Please, please, Jean Baptiste!

JEAN BAPTISTE [*to his wife*] Ent you tol' him I ent fisherman on those lake, no mo'?

CELESTE [*her eyes falling*] No, Jean Baptiste.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*throwing Langlois's hand on his wife's lips*] 'Ere, you tell him now; an' be damn quick! You better, you!

[*With eyes fixed in fear on her husband, the woman seats herself on the divan, beside Langlois.*]

CELESTE [*trembling, her voice shaken with held-in sobs*] Gabriel, Jean Baptiste git rich. We got grand 'ouse on the Bayou, an' aut'mobile for ride in. You ondastan'?

GABRIEL [*much perturbed*] Celeste, yo' voice ent same no mo'. What been 'appen? I ent able ondastan' you, not one word.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*shaking her shoulder*] Tell him I got ten twelve-man gas trawl boat.

CELESTE. Gabriel, Jean Baptiste got boat, now, for sein the shrimp.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Tell him I make twenty thou-san' dolla on the fert'lize.

GABRIEL [*tenderly*] Celeste, try you git compose. [*The Boy, consulting an Ingersoll watch with an air of importance, appears at the door, center back. Jean Baptiste watches the Boy with something like desperation in his expression,*

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evincing fear that Gabriel may go without learning the true state of affairs on the Bayou.]
Celeste, Celeste, git like yo'self, agin, you.

CELESTE. Gabriel, Jean Baptiste say for me to tell you . . .

[Celeste's voice breaks. She hides her face in her hands, sobbing aloud. The Boy comes into the room and taps Langlois on the hand.]

GABRIEL *[to Celeste, his voice earnest, appealing]* Celeste, you mus' git you compose—for I mus' go verra soon, now; an' wan' take yo' las' word with me.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Celeste, Celeste!

BOY *[very important]* Most train time now—Uncle Gabe's got to go.

GABRIEL *[rising]* I mus' go for take my train, Celeste.

JEAN BAPTISTE *[in desperate appeal]* In Name of God, Celeste, don't let Gabriel go—an' not tell him I been kind to you, that I ent made bad 'usban'!

CELESTE *[in a voice that steadily gets more control of itself]* I tol' him that, verra first thing, Jean Baptiste. I say to Gabriel you always verra, verra good to me.

JEAN BAPTISTE. Those been all I care for, now; nothin' else.

CELESTE *[in an anxious but composed tone]* Gabriel, you ent nevva goin' forgit that Jean Baptiste verra good to me, that he ent made bad 'usban'?

GABRIEL. No, nevva, Celeste. *[Reaching out his hand.]* Where yo' 'and, Jean Baptiste?

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[*Shaking Beauséjour's hand.*] Jean Baptiste, stronges' man on the Bayou, good-bye. [*Celeste rises, standing anxiously, her eyes upon Langlois. Finding Celeste's hand.*] An' good-bye, Celeste. It been nice talk we 'ave togedda. I will think of all we 'ave say, these day, many time. When a man git like me, now, blin' an' deaf, he 'ave to fin' good company in his own 'ead. Good-bye. [*Langlois lays his hand on the Boy's shoulder and starts toward the door at center back. Pausing and turning back to face the room.*] Jean Baptiste, I wan' one las' word with you. Celeste be too thin. These stink on the Bayou is not good for her health. Maybe, jus' so good as 'ere, if you go an' live an' fish on Lake St. Gervaise. You strong man — you make the good livin' anywhere, Jean Baptiste. Good-bye. Good-bye.

CELESTE. Good-bye.

JEAN BAPTISTE [*weakly*] Good-bye. [*Exit Langlois and Boy. For a few moments, Jean Baptiste and Celeste stand, facing each other. The woman looks radiant; the man, crushed. With a sweep of his arm.*] The two fac'ry, the ten gas-boat, the wharf, the business, the grand 'ouse — I make all those — an', these day, after sixteen year, Gabriel Langlois come back. [*Short pause.*] An' all he git been the stink.

[*As Beauséjour closes his speech, his eyes light on the lamp. He starts, looking at it, as if he suddenly saw an enemy, jeering and mocking him. He turns off the light.*]

CURTAIN

THE SLUMP

BY

FREDERIC LANSING DAY

CHARACTERS

JAMES MADDEN

FLORENCE MADDEN

EDGAR MIX

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THE SLUMP

TIME: *The present. About four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in December.*

SCENE: *A dingy room showing the very worst of lower middle-class American taste. The dining table in the center is of "golden oak"; and a sideboard at the left, a morris chair at the right and front, and three dining-room chairs (one of which is in the left rear corner, the others at the table), are all of this same finish. The paper on the wall is at once tawdry and faded. A tarnished brass gas jet is suspended from the right wall, just over the morris chair. In the back wall and to the left is a door, leading outside. Another door leads from the left wall to the rest of the house. A low, rather dirty window in the back wall, to the right of the center, looks out on a muddy river with the dispiriting houses of a small, grimy manufacturing city beyond. On the back wall are one or two old-fashioned engravings with sentimental subjects, and several highly colored photographs of moving-picture stars, each of them somewhat askew. A few pictures on the other walls are mostly cheap prints cut out of the Sunday papers. In the right-hand rear corner is an air-tight stove. The whole room has an appearance of hopeless untidiness and slovenliness.*

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At the right of the morris chair is a stand supporting a cheap phonograph, with records on a lower shelf.

Outside it is a dull grey day. The afternoon light is already beginning to wane.

As the curtain rises, James Madden is sitting behind the table in the center of the room. He is a rather small man of thirty-five, his hair just beginning to turn grey at the temples. Spectacles, a peering manner, and the sallow pallor of his face all suggest the man of a sedentary mode of life. His clothes are faded and of a poor cut, but brushed and neat. There is something ineffectual but distinctly appealing about the little man.

Madden is working on a pile of bills which are strewn over the top of the table. He picks up a bill, looks at it, and draws in his under lip with an expression of dismay. He writes down the amount of the bill on a piece of paper, below six or seven other rows of figures. He looks at another bill, and his expression becomes even more distracted.

MADDEN [*with exasperation*] Oh!

[He brings his fist down on the table with a limp whack; then turns and looks helplessly toward the door at the left. After a moment this door starts to open. Madden turns quickly to the front, trying to compose his face and busying himself with the bills. The door continues to open, and Mrs. Madden now issues from it lazily. She is thirty-two years old, and a good half head taller than her husband. Where he is thin and bony, she has

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already begun to lose her figure. Her yellow hair, the color of molasses kisses, is at once greasy and untidy, and seems ready to come to pieces. Her face is beginning to lose its contour—the uninspired face of a lower-middle-class woman who has once been pretty in a rather cheap way. She is sloppily dressed in a showy purple silk. Her skirt is short, and she wears brand new, high, shiny, mahogany colored boots. She has powdered her nose.]

MRS. MADDEN [*uninterestedly, in a slow, flat, nasal voice*] How long y' been home?—Yer pretty late f'r Sat'rd'y.

MADDEN [*still looking down and trying to control his feelings*] The head bookkeeper kept me, checkin' up the mill pay roll. I been here [*consulting his watch*] just seven minutes.

MRS. MADDEN [*yawning*] Thanks.—Yer s' darn acc'rate, Jim. I didn' really wanta know.

[*He looks at another bill and writes down the total on the same piece of paper as before, keeping his head averted so that she may not see his face.*]

MRS. MADDEN. Jim. [*With lazy self-satisfaction*] Look up an' glimpse yer wifey in 'r new boots. [*She draws up her skirts sufficiently to show the boots. Madden looks up unwillingly and makes a movement of exasperation.*]

MADDEN. Oh Florrie!

MRS. MADDEN. W'at's a matter? Don'choo like 'em?

MADDEN. You didn't need another pair, Florrie.

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MRS. MADDEN [*on the defensive*] Y' wouldn' have me look worse 'n one o' these furriners, would y'? There's Mrs. Montanio nex' door; she's jus' got a pair o' mahogany ones an' a pair o' lemon colored ones. — An' *her* husban's on'y a "slasher."

MADDEN. Slashers get a big sight more pay than under bookkeepers these days, Florrie.

MRS. MADDEN [*persuasively*] Got 'em at a bargain, anyways. Jus' think, Jim. On'y twelve, an' they *was* sixteen. [*Madden groans audibly. She changes the subject hastily.*] W'at's a news down town?

MADDEN [*seriously*] Florrie — [*He hesitates and then seems to change his mind. He relaxes and speaks wearily, trying to affect an offhand manner.*] Nothin' much. [*Struck by an unpleasant recollection*] Comin' home by Market Wharf I saw 'em pull a woman out o' the river.

MRS. MADDEN [*interested*] Y' don' say, Jim. Was she dead?

MADDEN [*nervously*] I . . . I don't know. I didn't stop. [*He passes his hand across his face with a sudden gesture of horror.*] You know, Florrie, I hate things like that.

MRS. MADDEN. Well — y' poor boob! Not t' find out if she was dead!

[*She gives an impatient shrug of the shoulders, and passes behind him, going over to the window at the back and looking out aimlessly. Madden picks up another bill and regards it malevolently. After a moment she turns carelessly toward him.*]

MRS. MADDEN. Jim. [*He does not look up.*] Say Jim. I'm awful tired o' cookin'. There ain't

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a thing t' eat in th' house. Le's go down t' Horseman's t'night f'r a lobster supper, an' then take in a real show. Mrs. Montanio's tol' me—

MADDEN [*interrupting very gravely*] Florrie. [*He rises to his feet.*]

MRS. MADDEN [*continuing without a pause*] There's an awful comical show down 't th' Hyperion. Regal'r scream, they say. Mrs. Montanio—

MADDEN [*breaking in*] Florrie, there's some-
thin' I got to say to you.

MRS. MADDEN [*a little sulky*] I got lots I'd like t' say t' you. On'y I ain't sayin' it.

MADDEN [*more quietly*] I wasn't goin' to say it now . . . not till I finished goin' through these. [*He makes a gesture toward the bills.*] But when I saw your new shoes, an' specially when you spoke o' goin' out tonight . . .

MRS. MADDEN. Well, w'y shouldn' I? I got t' have *some* fun.

MADDEN [*keeping his self-control*] Look here, Florrie. D' you know what I was doin' when you came in?

MRS. MADDEN. I didn' notice. Figgerin' somethin', I s'pose. Y' always are.

MADDEN. This mornin' at the office I got called to the 'phone. The Excelsior Shoe Comp'ny said you cashed a check there yesterday for fifteen dollars. Said you bought a pair o' shoes . . . those, I suppose [*he looks at her feet—she turns away sulkily*] . . . an' had some money left over. Check came back to 'em this mornin' from the bank. . . . “No funds.”

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MRS. MADDEN [*with righteous but lazy indignation*] How'd I know there was n't no money in th' bank?

MADDEN. If you kept our check book up to date, you'd know.

MRS. MADDEN. W'at right they got not t' cash my check?

MADDEN [*still controlling himself*] The banks don't let you overdraw any more. [*He glances back at the bills.*] Do you know, I'm wonderin' why you did n't charge those boots.

MRS. MADDEN. I ain't got any account at th' Excelsior.

MADDEN. I guess it's the only place in town you haven't got one—You don't seem to remember what salary I get.

MRS. MADDEN. Sure—I know. Ninety-five a month. Y' know mighty well I'm ashamed o' you f'r not gettin' more. Mrs. Montanio's husban'—

MADDEN [*breaking in*] Hang the Montanios! [*More quietly*] Don't you see what I'm gettin' at? Here it is the twelfth o' December. You know my pay don't come in till the end o' the month. An' here you go an' draw all our money out o' the bank . . . an' more. [*Turning toward the table*] An' look at these bills!

MRS. MADDEN. James Madden, I like t' know w'at right you got t' talk t' me like that.

MADDEN [*thoughtfully*] I've always argued it's the woman's job to run the home. So I've let you handle the check book an' the accounts. [*He walks around the table, passing to its left and*

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looking down at the bills. With conviction] It's no use!—I don't just see how we're goin' to get out of this mess; but I do know one thing. [*Advancing toward her from the rear of the table*] After this I'm goin' to spend our money, even if I have to buy your dresses.

MRS. MADDEN [*with rising anger*] If you say I've been extravag'ant, James Madden, yer a plain liar!

MADDEN [*biting his lip and stepping back a pace*] Easy, Florrie!—I know you don't mean that, or—

MRS. MADDEN [*interrupting viciously*] I do.

MADDEN [*persuasively*] Look here, Florrie. We got to work this out together. There's no use gettin' mad. Prob'ly you aren't extravagant—really. Just considerin' the size o' my salary.

MRS. MADDEN. A pig couldn't live decent on *your* salary.

MADDEN. Other folks seem to get on, even in these times. What would you do if we had kids?

MRS. MADDEN. Thank the Lord we ain't got *them* t' think about.

MADDEN [*shocked*] Florence!

MRS. MADDEN. Well I guess anybody'd be glad not t' have kids with *you* f'r a husban'. Y' don't earn enough t' keep a cat—let alone kids!—An' jus' t' think they'd be like you!

MADDEN [*more surprised than angry*] Florence—you're talkin' like a street woman.

MRS. MADDEN. Oh I am, am I? Well I guess you treat me like a street woman.—Y' don't deserve t' have a wife.

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MADDEN. Well I don't guess I do. Not one like you!

MRS. MADDEN. That's right! That's right! Y' don' know how t' treat a lady.

MADDEN [*controlling himself*] Look here, Florrie. Don't let's get all het up over this.

MRS. MADDEN. Who's gettin' het up? [*Bursting past toward the door at the left*] I wish t' God you was a gen'leman!

MADDEN. Florrie—*don't*.

MRS. MADDEN [*turning on him from the other side of the table*] W'y don't y' go out an' dig in th' ditch? Y'd earn a damn sight more money th'n—

MADDEN [*with angry impatience*] You know I'm not strong enough.

MRS. MADDEN. Bony little shrimp!—Not even pep enough t' have kids!

MADDEN [*beside himself*] Florence! [*going toward her*] I'm goin' to tell you some things I never thought I would. You're just a plain, common, selfish, vulgar woman! You don't care one penny for anybody but yourself.—You an' your clothes an' your movies an' your sodas an' your candy! [*Mrs. Madden is glowering at him across the table. She is beginning to weep with rage. Two or three times she opens her mouth as if to speak, but each time he cuts her short.*] Look at the way you been leavin' this house lately. [*He makes an inclusive gesture toward the room.*] The four years I've lived with you would drive a saint to Hell! [*Mrs. Madden marches furiously past him and over to her hat*

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and coat, which are hanging from pegs at the right, just in front of the stove.] I wish I'd never seen you!

MRS. MADDEN [*getting her coat and hat*] D' y' think I'm goin' t' stay in this house t' be talked to like that? [*Putting on her hat viciously*] D' y' think I'm goin' t' stand that kind of a thing? [*Putting on her coat. Sobbing angrily*] I guess . . . you'll be . . . pretty sorry when I've . . . gone. [*Coming closer to him on her way to the outside door*] If . . . if I did somethin' . . . if somethin' . . . *happened* t' me . . . I guess you . . . you wouldn't never f'rgive yer-self! [*She is at the door.*]

MADDEN. I don't worry about *you*. [*She turns on him.*] You wouldn't do anything like that. You're too *yellow*!

MRS. MADDEN [*sobbing, in a fury*] You'll . . . see!

[*With one last glare at him, she turns, opens the door, and goes out, slamming the door behind her. Madden stares after her, almost beside himself. He takes several steps across the room, then crosses and recrosses it, trying to regain control of himself. Little by little his anger fades; the energy goes out of his pacing, and finally he approaches the table and sits down in his old place with a hopeless droop of the shoulders. He starts to add up the total amounts of the bills which he has already set down on the piece of paper. His hand moves mechanically. Suddenly a shadow crosses his face, as an idea begins to form in his mind. He looks straight ahead, his eyes opening*

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wide with horror. With a sudden movement he springs up from the table and goes quickly to the window, where he looks out anxiously at the river. He turns back into the room and passes his hand across his face with the same gesture of horror he used earlier in speaking to his wife of the woman who had fallen into the river.]

MADDEN. Ugh!

[He returns to the table, his face still dark with the fear that has seized him. At the table he pauses a moment, and stands, thinking. Once again he passes his hand across his forehead with the same gesture of horrified fear. He drops into the chair behind the table, his face still worried. After a moment his expression changes, and he shakes his head in disbelief. He bends again over the bills. From outside comes the faint sound of someone whistling "Tell Me." The sound grows gradually louder and louder, as if the whistler were coming nearer up the street. There is a sharp rap at the door. Madden starts violently, and jumping up goes quickly to the door. He opens it eagerly, and relaxes with obvious disappointment as Edgar Mix enters breezily. Mix is about twenty-five; a loosely put together, thin-faced youth in a new suit of ready-made clothes which are of too blatant a pattern and much too extreme a cut to be in really good taste. He is whistling the refrain of "Tell Me."]

MIX [as he passes in] H'llo, James. [Without stopping for an answer, he crosses the room and starts to remove his hat and coat.] Where's the sister?

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MADDEN [*who has closed the door—dully*] She's gone out.

[*As if struck by an idea, Madden reopens the door and goes outside. He can be seen looking first to the left, then to the right, and finally down at the river before him. Mix finishes taking off his outer garments, which he hangs with a flourish on pegs near the stove. He is still whistling the same refrain.*]

MIX. W'at's a matter with you? Tryin' t' freeze me out? [*His voice has the same flat quality as his sister's, but it is full of energy. Madden does not appear to hear him; he comes back into the house, shutting the door behind him. His face is anxious, a fact which he tries to hide from Mix.*]

MADDEN. Want to see Florence? [*Mix pauses in his whistling.*]

MIX. Sure.—Nothin' important, though. Just about a little party she said you an' she was goin' t' take me on t'night. [*He commences whistling cheerily the opening bars of his refrain.*]

MADDEN [*dully*] Sorry. I don't know anythin' about it.

[*Mix stops whistling suddenly and looks down with dismay. Then, with his hands in his pockets, he slowly whistles the four descending notes at the end of the third bar and the beginning of the fourth. He stops and shakes his head, then slowly whistles a few more bars of the refrain, starting where he just left off, and letting himself drop into the morris chair on the descending note*

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in the fifth bar. After another brief silence, he finishes the refrain, but with a sudden return of the same quick, light mood in which he entered. The refrain over, he begins again at the beginning and whistles two or three more bars. Madden has meanwhile sat down at the table and is again going over the bills.]

MIX. Jim—ever get a piece runnin' in yer head so y' can't get it out? [*Madden is looking vacantly down at the bills.*] I s'pose I been w'istlin' that tune steady f'r three whole weeks. [*He whistles three or four more bars of the same refrain.*] Like it? [*Madden does not appear to have heard him.*] P'raps Florrie's got th' record f'r that on th' phornagraph. Has she, Jim?—It ain't been out long.

MADDEN [*impatiently*] Oh I don't know, Ed.

MIX [*after whistling very softly a bar or two more*] I see some girl fell in the river.

MADDEN [*startled*] What?

MIX. Yep. They was tryin' t' make her come to. No use. She was a goner all right.

MADDEN [*rising from his chair—trying to control himself*] Where was this?

MIX. Oh not s' far below here. Saw her m'self, I did.

MADDEN [*with increasing fear—taking a step or two toward Mix*] Did you see her face?

MIX. Nope. Somethin' 'd struck her face. Y' 'd hardly know she was a woman 'cept f'r her clothes.

MADDEN [*wildly—coming closer*] How long ago?

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MIX. W'at y' gettin' s' het up about? [*Madden is almost frantic.*] — Oh . . . 'bout 'n hour.

[*Madden relaxes suddenly. The reaction is almost too much for him. He slowly goes back to the table.*]

MADDEN [*nervously*] Oh . . . down by Market Wharf?

MIX. Sure. Did y' see her? [*Madden sits down heavily.*]

MADDEN. Uhuh. [*For a second or two there is silence. Madden rearranges the bills in front of him. Mix lolls in the arm chair, whistling very softly.*]

MADDEN. Ed.

MIX. Uhuh.

MADDEN. Would you call Florrie a . . . a . . . well — one o' them high-strung girls?

MIX. Gosh no!

MADDEN. You don't think she'd be the sort to fly off the handle and do . . . well, somethin' desp'rate?

MIX. Come off. You know's well as I do, Florrie's nothin' but a big jelly fish.

MADDEN. Ed — I don't want you to talk that way about Florrie. — You don't 'preciate her.

MIX. Well w'at's bitin' you? — W'at y' askin' all these questions f'r, anyways?

MADDEN [*dully*] Oh nothin'.

[*Madden looks down uneasily at the bills, but without giving them any real attention. Mix yawns and lazily shifts his position in the arm chair.*]

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MADDEN. Ed—I do want to ask you some-
thin'.

MIX [*indifferently*] Shoot.

MADDEN. I want you to tell the truth about
this, Ed. Even if you think it will hurt my feel-
in's. It won't.

MIX. Spit it out.

MADDEN. Just what sort of a chap do you
think I am?

MIX [*considering*] Huh! That's easy.—D'
y' really wanta know w'at I think?

MADDEN [*gravely*] I cert'nly do.

MIX. Well—if you really wanta know, I
think yer a damn good kid [*Madden looks
suddenly grateful*] . . . but a bit weak on the
pep.

MADDEN [*a trifle dubiously*] Thanks. [*Thought-
fully*] You don't think I'm unfair?

MIX. Unfair? W'y no—How d' y' mean?

MADDEN. Well . . . here in the house, f'r in-
stance.

MIX. Lord no, Jim! Yer s' easy goin' it'd be
a holy shame f'r anyone t' slip anythin' over on
y'. [*After a short pause, suspiciously*] W'at y'
askin' all these questions f'r, anyways?

MADDEN. Oh—nothin'.

MIX [*struck with an idea—starting up from
his chair*] I know w'at's bitin' you. You an'
Florrie's had a row. [*He walks up to Madden
and taps his arm familiarly with the back of his
hand.*] Come on. Own up! [*He passes around
behind Madden until he stands behind the chair at
the left of the table.*]

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MADDEN. Well . . . we did have a . . . a sort of a . . . disagreement.

MIX. I bet y' did. — Look here, Jim. W'at's a use o' takin' it s' hard?

MADDEN [*gravely*] The trouble is — [*he breaks off*] I guess I was mostly in the wrong.

MIX [*sitting down vehemently*] Tell that to a poodle! I know you an' I know Florrie. I guess I'd know who'd be in the wrong, all right. She was bad enough w'en y' firs' got sweet on 'r — jus' a lazy fool, even if she did have a pretty face. — Gee how you did fall f'r her face! Moonin' around an' sayin' how *wonderful* she was! [*He chuckles.*] An' Florrie twenty-eight years old . . . an' jus' waitin' t' fall into yer arms.

MADDEN. Ed. Don't say things like that, even in fun.

MIX. Hell! It's th' truth. . . . But lately, Florrie's jus' plain slumped. She's nothin' now but a selfish, lazy pig.

MADDEN [*angrily*] I won't have you talk that way about Florrie. She's made a good wife . . . on the whole. She don't go traipsin' off like some o' your fly-by-nights. She's affection'te . . . an' good tempered . . . an' —

MIX. Rats! Yer havin' a damn hard time t' say anythin' real nice about 'r. I would n' stretch th' truth s' far as *that* [*snapping his fingers*] f'r her, even if she is m' sister.

MADDEN [*vehemently*] Ed — if you can't talk decently about a nice girl like Florrie, I guess you better get out.

MIX [*slowly rising from his chair*] Well I'll be

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damned! — All right, I *will* go. . . . Jim — yer crazy!

MADDEN [*rising and putting a restraining arm on Mix's shoulder — nervously*] Don't mind me, Ed. I didn't really mean what I said. — I'm all upset.

MIX. Sh'd think you were. [*After a slight hesitation he sits down again.*] W'at y' quarrelin' 'bout? — Money?

MADDEN [*also sitting down again*] Uhuh.

MIX. Huh! Thought as much. . . . As I was sayin', I know Florrie.

MADDEN. It really wasn't her fault.

MIX [*slowly and emphatically*] Well you are sappy. Ever'budy knows Florrie spends more money th'n you an' all my family put t'gether.

MADDEN. You wouldn't have me deny her ev'rythin'? . . . She's got to have *some* fun.

MIX. But Lord, man, y' don't earn th' income of a John D. Rockefeller.

MADDEN [*somberly*] I know. . . . I ought to do much better. But that isn't *her* fault. Besides, she's learned her lesson.

MIX. Well, I'll be damned! T' hear you talk this way. O' course y' kep' yer mouth pretty well shut. But we all figgered you was havin' th' devil's own time with Florrie!

MADDEN [*rising from his seat — with deep feeling*] Ed — [*he turns and goes over to the window, looks out and then faces around*] I never knew . . . till just now . . . how fond I was of her.

[*Mix regards him with a puzzled expression. Madden begins to walk up and down the room, at*

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first slowly and thoughtfully, then more and more nervously. The light outside begins to fade.]

MIX [*after a pause—looking up at Madden*] Jim. Y' never c'n tell w'at these women 're goin' t' do—can yer?

MADDEN [*stopping abruptly—intensely*] I s'pose not, Ed. [*He goes on a few steps and then stops again.*] Even . . . even when they're not . . . high strung. [*Madden continues his nervous pacing of the floor. Mix watches him with increasing annoyance.*]

MADDEN [*suddenly*] Was that a footstep?

[*Mix shakes his head. Madden goes quickly to the window and looks out. From there he rushes to the door and peers out, first to one side and then to the other. He shuts the door, and with a hopeless look on his face comes back into the room. Outside, the light is steadily fading.*]

MIX [*slowly rising from his chair, a look of still greater annoyance on his face*] I guess Florrie ain't comin' f'r some time.—I'll be goin'. [*He goes over toward his hat and coat.*]

MADDEN [*nervously*] Why don't you drop into Smith's soda parlor? That's where she always is, this time o' the afternoon.

MIX. She ain't *there*, I don't guess. . . . I jus' come from there m'self.

MADDEN [*intensely*] You did?

MIX. Sure.

MADDEN [*wildly*] Ed—I can't stand this waitin' for her any more. [*He goes quickly and gets his coat and hat from a peg near the stove.*] I'm goin' out.

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[Madden goes swiftly across the room to the door at the back and so out. He is seen to pass outside in front of the back window. Mix takes a few involuntary steps after him toward the door, then stops and gives a low whistle of astonishment. After a moment he turns and starts back toward his hat and coat.]

MIX *[half aloud]* Poor ol' Jim.

[He gets his hat and coat and puts them on. In the course of a few seconds, the reflective look has gone from his face; he begins to whistle softly the same refrain as before. From his pocket he produces a cigarette, which he places in his mouth. He is preparing to light it when a thought strikes him. He goes quickly over to the phonograph and bending down, takes a record and examines it. It has become so dark that he is unable to read the title; so he lights the neighboring gas jet. He then examines two or three records in quick succession, finally producing one which causes a smile to spread over his face.]

MIX. Ah!

[He places his find on the phonograph, winds the machine, and starts the record playing. The tune is the same one he has been whistling the whole afternoon. With an expression of great pleasure he hears the record start, at the same time producing a huge nickel watch from his pocket and glancing at it casually. As he sees the time, his whole expression changes.]

MIX *[throwing his cigarette impatiently on the floor]* Hell!

[He stops the phonograph and moves back the

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playing arm. He buttons up his overcoat, turns up his collar and adjusts his hat. Then, his whistling suddenly breaking out again loudly into his favorite refrain, he marches quickly across the room to the door at the back, and goes out. He is seen to pass by the window, and his whistling is heard to die away gradually down the street. Stillness has hardly fallen when the door at the back opens, and Mrs. Madden enters. She appears a trifle chilly, but seems otherwise to have recovered her composure. Closing the door behind her, she comes forward lazily to the table. She looks down at the piles of bills before her with a perfectly vacant stare, and taking from her pocket a pound box of candy, tosses it down on the papers. She opens the cover and eats a large chocolate cream indolently and with evident pleasure. Next, she removes her hat and coat, throwing them carelessly on the table beside the candy. She walks with a lazy, flat-footed step over to the gas jet at the right, and turns up the gas sufficiently for reading. Looking down, she notices the record left on the phonograph.]

MRS. MADDEN [*with slow pleasure*] Hm!

[*Without bothering to find out whether or not the phonograph is wound up, she starts it going and places the playing arm with apparent carelessness so that the record begins playing about a third of the way through. She listens to the music for three or four seconds with an expression of indolent appreciation, then she crosses the floor to the door at the left, always moving with*

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the same flat-footed walk. Opening the door, she peers through it.]

MRS. MADDEN [*calling, her flat voice rising above the sound of the phonograph*] Oh Ji—im!

[*She listens a moment for an answer, but as there is none, she closes the door and turns around. Once again the music catches and holds her attention. She listens for an instant and then goes back to the table, making a heavy attempt at a dance step or two. From the pocket of her overcoat she extracts a new cheap novel, whose content is well advertised by a lurid colored cover. This she takes over to the morris chair. Another thought strikes her; she tosses the novel into the chair and goes back to the table, where she gets five or six chocolate creams from the candy box, depositing them in a row on the right arm of the morris chair. Then she takes up her book and sits down. For a moment she tries to read, but all is not comfortable yet. She changes her position two or three times in the chair. At last she rises, heaving a disgusted sigh. Dropping her book in the chair, she walks with flat, heavy steps across the room and out of the door at the left, leaving it open. She returns almost instantly, dragging two greasy looking sofa pillows after her. She kicks the door to and crosses to the morris chair. Here she places one of the pillows on the ground for her feet, the other at the back of the chair. Picking up her book once more, she settles back into the chair with an expression of perfect animal contentment. She puts another chocolate cream*

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into her mouth, and finds her place in the book. Then the music again engages her attention; she leans back with a foolish smile on her face as she listens. Constantly chewing the piece of candy, she hums a bar or two of the tune, which is still being played by the phonograph. Then she settles down to her reading, eating candy as she feels inclined. The phonograph reaches the end of the record, and makes that annoying clicking noise which shows it should be shut off. For two or three seconds Mrs. Madden pays no attention to it. Finally she raises herself in the chair and without getting up she reaches over and switches off the phonograph, then settles back to her reading. Someone goes swiftly by the window outside. After a moment the door at the back opens, and Madden stands in the doorway.]

MADDEN [*in the doorway, catching sight of Mrs. Madden—with pathetic eagerness*] Florrie! [*He closes the door.*]

MRS. MADDEN [*without looking up—in lazy, matter-of-fact tones*] 'Lo, Jim.

MADDEN [*coming forward toward his wife*] Are you *really* safe, Florrie?

[*She looks up with a glance of feeble annoyance.*]

MRS. MADDEN. Sure. I'm all right. [*She looks down again.*]

MADDEN [*coming still closer*] Oh I'm so thankful! . . . I . . . I been lookin' for you, Florrie.—Where you been?

MRS. MADDEN [*without looking up*] W'at d' y' say?

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MADDEN. Where you been, Florrie? [*With anxiety.*] You didn't go down by the river?

MRS. MADDEN [*looking up*] Lord no! W'at-ever made y' think that? [*She takes up a chocolate cream and bites off half of it.*] I just took Mrs. Montanio over t' Brailey's new place f'r a couple o' ice cream sodas. [*She looks down again.*]

MADDEN [*softly*] Oh. [*A shadow passes over his face and vanishes.*] Florrie. [*He sits down on the left arm of the morris chair and puts his arm affectionately about her shoulders.*] I didn't know what I was sayin'.

MRS. MADDEN [*puzzled—without looking up*] W'at y' talkin' 'bout?

MADDEN [*pathetically*] I guess I ought not to ask you to forgive me.

MRS. MADDEN [*looking up*] F'give y'? [*Remembering.*] Oh yes—y' *did* call me some darn hard names.

MADDEN. I know. [*Slowly—looking into her face*] D' you think you *could* forgive me?

MRS. MADDEN [*lazily*] Sure. I guess so.—Glad t' see y' got over yer pet.

[*He smiles a pathetic, eager smile, and takes her left hand, which is lying in her lap. With an impatient movement, she stretches her left arm out and back, carrying with it his left hand and forcing him off the arm of the chair.*]

MRS. MADDEN. Say Jim—look w'at's on th' table. [*Madden sighs softly and takes a few steps toward the table. He sees the candy box;*

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a darker shadow appears on his face for a second or two, and is gone.]

MRS. MADDEN. Have a chocklick, Jim. [*She herself picks one up from the arm of the chair; then she looks down again at her book, eating the candy as she reads.*]

MADDEN [*Unheeding—taking a step or two back toward her from the table—with deep feeling*] Florrie. I got somethin' I want to tell you. [*She does not look up.. He takes another step toward her.*] After you 'd gone out, I kept thinkin' . . . thinkin' what mighta happened to you.

MRS. MADDEN [*with a short chuckle*] Y' poor boob!

MADDEN. Florrie—look at me. [*She looks up with an expression of lazy annoyance.*] Out there—[*he gestures toward the door*] the river looked so cold an' black—An' I couldn't find you— . . . I knew all of a sudden I . . . I hadn't really meant what I said to you.

MRS. MADDEN [*impatiently*] Tha's all right. [*She looks down again at her book.*]

MADDEN [*with increasing emotion—going to the arm chair and looking down at her tenderly from behind it*] I kept thinkin' . . . thinkin' how pretty an' how . . . how good natured you are. [*With some embarrassment*] I thought how we used to walk . . . down by the river. Four years ago . . . you know—just before we was married.

MRS. MADDEN [*with growing annoyance*] Don'-choo want 'nuther chocklick, Jim?

MADDEN [*unheeding*] Florrie—d' you remem-

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ber that time . . . the first time you ever let me hold your hand?

MRS. MADDEN [*looking up impatiently*] W'at's bitin' you? Don't y' see I'm readin'? [*He steps back and to the left a pace or two. She looks down again.*]

MADDEN [*humbly*] Scuse me, Florrie. I just wanted to tell you. [*With great earnestness.*] — You know, I'd forgotten . . . I mean I didn't rearlize . . . till just now — [*awkwardly*] how fond . . . how much I . . . I love you.

MRS. MADDEN [*thickly, through a chocolate cream which she is eating — without looking up*] Tha's . . . nice.

[*He looks at her pathetically, hoping that she will raise her head. His face is intense with longing. After a short interval he gives it up. He turns sadly and goes toward the door at the left, passing in back of the table.*]

MRS. MADDEN [*taking another chocolate and looking after him — he has almost reached the door*] Jim. [*He stops and turns eagerly.*] You ain't such a bad ol' boy. [*His face is suddenly radiant. He takes several steps back toward her, bringing him behind the table. She has looked down at her book again. Coaxingly.*] Goin' t' take me t' Horseman's t'night f'r lobster?

[*All the eagerness, the radiance, vanishes from his face. He sits down heavily in the chair behind the table. He looks at her, uncomprehending, hurt, disillusionized.*]

MRS. MADDEN [*without looking up*] An' say — [*she puts another chocolate in her mouth. Speak-*

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ing through it thickly.] I'm jus' dyin' t' see a real . . . comical . . . show.

[Madden's head droops limply. He looks dumbly at his wife, then back at the table. His left hand goes out toward the bills; then he drops both elbows limply on the table, resting his weight on them. Mrs. Madden does not look up, but continues to read and munch a chocolate cream. Madden stares in front of him miserably, hopelessly, as the curtain falls.]

THE MOURNER

BY

JAMES MAHONEY

CHARACTERS

PIERROT

PIERRETTE

COLUMBINE

PIERROT'S MOTHER

PANTALON

MEPHISTOPHELES, *who also plays the parts of*
PROLOGUE and EPILOGUE

AN OLD GENT, *who, although he is not a member*
of the cast, has a better right than any of them
to be considered a person of the play

THREE COWLED MUTES

AN AUTHOR, STAGE-HANDS, AND OTHERS—*none of*
whom appear in the play

First produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club at
Agassiz House Theatre April 13 and 15, 1922.

Permission for amateur or professional performances
of any kind must first be obtained from The 47 Workshop,
Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass. Moving Picture rights
reserved.

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The curtain rises — disclosing a pair of curtains draped in cloudy blue folds. There is a noise of carpentry, of smothered and excited ordering about, and now and then the curtains bulge as some large object is carried past behind them. Mephistopheles parts them and, with that perfect assurance that so often conceals a complete lack of assurance, comes out on the fore-stage; but we, perceptive people that we are, can see that he is nervous, painfully aware of his own importance — were it not, in fact, for the sinister scarlet of his costume, we might mistake him for the guest of honor at a public dinner. He clears his throat and covertly consults a slip of paper concealed in the palm of his hand. He begins to speak the Prologue.

PROLOGUE. Ladies and gentlemen . . . [*He furtively consults the slip of paper.*] I really must ask you to pardon me for coming before you so — so entirely unprepared, but I was not informed until the last moment. . . . It is, in fact, an — er — unexpected honor — and — er — I'm afraid I am quite — um — unprepared. [*He consults the slip of paper.*] The author has asked me to explain in his behalf — er . . . [*He consults the slip of paper, is puzzled, quite shamelessly turns it over, and finding no help on the*

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reverse side, wads it up in disgust and chucks it into the foot-lights.] Oh well! Why not be frank? *He* was supposed to make this speech. I usually work behind the scenes — in fact I do my most popular work in total darkness. But he — well, you see, it's his first play, and with the state of mind he's in . . .

TENOR VOICE [*in agony behind the cloudy blue curtains*] Oh dear! Oh dear! Can't you do anything right!

BASSO PROFUNDO [*also behind the curtains*] Gangway! Gangway!

TENOR VOICE. You're doing absolutely everything you can to spoil it all! *Deliberately!* Every one of you!

MANY HORRID COARSE VOICES. How does he get that-a-way! Take him out! Give him the air!

TENOR VOICE. Oh, my God! My God!

[*Sounds of an author borne struggling from the stage. Mephistopheles indicates this unseemly rumpus with his thumb and, with an indulgent grin, goes on with the Prologue.*]

PROLOGUE. The principal thing he wants explained about his play is that there isn't any explanation to it. It's not supposed to be artistic, or symbolic, or true to life — in short, not to mystify or bewilder at all. It's just a foolish bit of fantasy, and he hopes that you may be entertained by it without expecting any more of it than that. And now ladies and gentlemen, thanking you for your kind attention — [*A hand waves frantically from the wings.*]

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TENOR VOICE. Psst! Psst! For heaven's sake! [*Mephistopheles turns to conduct with the owner of the hand a conversation by sign of lips ending in a large comprehending "Oh."*]

PROLOGUE. Oh yes! About the applause! Although there are moments when, particularly with the exceptionally distinguished and intelligent audience I see before me, the enthusiasm is bound to be beyond all restraint, he is so mortally afraid some of his very best lines will be lost in the outbursts that I must ask you at least to try to keep as quiet as you can. You see, he is a very warm personal friend of mine. . . . In fact—but this must remain a dead secret, strictly among ourselves . . . [*He gives a hasty look toward the wings, steps across the foot-lights; and, making a megaphone of his two hands, confides the dead secret in a loud and penetrating whisper.*] I gave him the whole idea of the play myself! [*The lights go out. In the momentary darkness, Prologue disappears. The cloudy blue curtains part. Slanting a little to the right, a slender ladder of unequal rungs rises into the night sky. A flood of pale light streams down the ladder and the end of it we cannot see rests upon—but the players will tell us all about that. They are Pierrot and Pierrette, and at present they are laughing so immoderately from sheer delight with the gods, the world, themselves, and each other, that they can tell us nothing at all. Drunk with laughter, Pierrette comes to steady herself against the ladder. Then, when she sees what it is, she throws back her head, shaking all its ringlets of red-gold hair, to*

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burst into peals louder and more hilarious than any before. Pierrette, we are afraid, lacks breeding. Certainly her costume could cover larger area without being considered offensively prudish.]

PIERRETTE. O Pierrot! Will you look! Is there anything else so ridiculous in all the world? [*Pierrot turns. His laughter dies in his throat. Slowly he approaches the thing and touches it as if he expected it to be white-hot.*]

PIERROT. The other end of it leans against the rim of the moon.

PIERRETTE. I can't see the other end of it. Besides, the moon is ridiculous.

PIERROT. You didn't look carefully enough, Pierrette. It's only a little shining thread. . . . That is because it's so very far away.

PIERRETTE. Oh! Now I see it! It's just like a little shining thread! But it's entirely unreasonable of you not to laugh at it. [*In fright.*] Pierrot! We aren't laughing at *any*-thing!

PIERROT [*staring at the moon*] If one climbed to the other end, it would be quite as wide up there as it is down here. But—if one looked *down*! There'd be *nothing* below . . . nothing but a little shining thread . . . as if spun by a spider. . . .

PIERRETTE [*suddenly clapping her hands*] Oh! How ridiculous that is!

PIERROT [*still staring at the moon*] They say it's my duty to climb to the moon.

PIERRETTE. Then you may be sure you'd find it unpleasant. Look at *me*, Pierrot! Do you not

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find me exceedingly pleasant? It is, in a way, my custom.

PIERROT [*still staring at the moon*] It will be horrible to look down . . .

PIERRETTE [*seizing his arm*] You must n't leave me, Pierrot! My nose becomes red if I weep—and that is terrible! [*Sob.*] Besides, I am in the habit of being kissed by men . . . [*Sob.*] In fact, when there's a moon, I *must* be kissed . . . [*Sob.*] . . .

PIERROT. I did n't know you were so beautiful, Pierrette. Your tears are like little lakes upon your eyes. . . .

PIERRETTE. Oh, that is very pretty! In what book did you read it?

PIERROT. No, they aren't like little lakes. They are like little dreams—and your mouth is entirely covered with little dreams. It seems to me too there are dreams in your hair. It seems to me all the dreams of all men are to be found in your hair. . . .

PIERRETTE. Pierrot! I honestly believe you are inventing all of that as you speak! It is very pretty.

PIERROT. All my life I have sought the woman they say one would never dare to love as one loves other women—whose love would be wholly unlike their love—

PIERRETTE. I hate this woman.

PIERROT. But, Pierrette! In the other cases it was always very different, and how could I know?

PIERRETTE. I hate this woman—and if you

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had any regard for *me*, you'd kiss me before you talk any more. I've heard them say it is utterly wonderful to kiss me.

PIERROT. If only you'd let me tell you what I want, Pierrette! I want—I want—I am permitted only to look into your eyes. . . . [*Pause.*]

PIERRETTE. Ah!

PIERROT. Ah! [*Pause.*] There's a great quantity of moon-light about. . . .

PIERRETTE. It comes, I think, from the moon. . . .

PIERROT. Yes, the moon. . . . [*Pause.*] I was saying something important. What was I saying?

PIERRETTE. I was about to say something. . . . [*Long pause, after which she whispers suddenly.*] Kiss me! [*She offers herself entirely, with smiling mouth and unpursed lips. But Pierrot, without touching her otherwise, kisses her mouth, tenderly, reverently, scarcely touching her at all. Then, just as he is about to take her with a rush into his arms, she turns her face away, uttering a great sigh.*] Ah! How unhappy I am!

PIERROT. Pierrette! How could *that* have made you *unhappy*!

PIERRETTE. I am just unhappy.

PIERROT. But you must n't be unhappy! Come, I'll find you a million ridiculous things—

PIERRETTE. I'd rather be unhappy. It's wonderful to be so unhappy as this!

PIERROT [*scratching his head*] I don't understand you, Pierrette!

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PIERRETTE. I don't understand myself. . . . I didn't know there could be so great a longing. What is it I want, Pierrot? Do you think perhaps it could be found in the moon? [*Pierrot starts in fright.*] There must be strange and very wonderful things in the moon—it has that look.

PIERROT. I assure you that I see nothing whatever in the moon.

PIERRETTE. I can see something.

PIERROT. But look from here, Pierrette. It's nothing but a shadow—a little evil shadow. . . .

PIERRETTE. It's true. I see nothing but a shadow. Perhaps it's not in the moon. It's possible it does n't exist at all.

[*But when heads are so close together as they look at the moon, it would be foolish not to kiss, and they kiss. Pierrot holds her away to look hungrily into her eyes before kissing her again—but here we become aware of a witness to this thing before which even those who did it closed their eyes. It is Columbine. She considers the whole thing most improper—and she doesn't at all approve of Pierrette's costume. But Columbine is not in the habit of saying what she thinks. She has been too well brought up.*]

COLUMBINE [*in a sweet, glad voice*] Why, Pierrot!

PIERROT. [*Turning like a boy caught loading a pea-shooter*] Columbine!

COLUMBINE. Your parents have been looking for you everywhere.

PIERROT. I was—I have been—I am taking

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a little walk. You can see I'm taking a little walk. To look at the moon.

COLUMBINE. They all believed it might be for some other reason — nowadays the world is so full of evil company and evil ways.

PIERROT. I was also looking at the stars.

COLUMBINE. They don't appreciate your better nature.

PIERROT. I believe, Columbine, that you are the only one who has ever really understood me.

COLUMBINE. But who is this person? Possibly she too is taking a little walk, to look at the moon — and also the stars?

PIERROT. Oh, that is my cousin — my little cousin from the country. She has just come up from the country, and something fell into her eye as she was looking at the moon.

COLUMBINE. I hope your eye is better, Madam?

PIERRETTE. It's much better, I thank you.

COLUMBINE. The country must be very different from what I had thought.

PIERRETTE. Plesanter, no doubt?

COLUMBINE. You are very beautiful, Madam. One would say you have exactly the look of one who is pretending she has not just been kissed. That is charming.

PIERRETTE. You too are very beautiful, Madam. One would say you have exactly the look of one who has never been kissed. I consider that too very charming, in its way.

COLUMBINE. I never permit men to kiss me. I appeal to their better natures.

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PIERRETTE. That is very clever of you.

COLUMBINE. Oh, I'm not clever. I've never known how to be clever.

PIERRETTE. That is often exceedingly clever.

COLUMBINE [*bursting into tears*] O, Pierrot! Pierrot! I am only a weak and simple girl, and you seemed so fine and strong!

PIERROT. But I've done nothing, Columbine.

COLUMBINE. *Pierrot!*

PIERROT [*gloomily folding his arms*] At least — it was almost nothing.

COLUMBINE [*drying her eyes*] But it wasn't your fault. One can see this woman understands the ways of men.

PIERROT. Ah! How wicked I am!

PIERRETTE. Truly, Madam, you understand the ways of men far better than I.

COLUMBINE. Madam, I forgive you. Indeed, I pity you.

PIERRETTE. You . . . You HUSSY!

PIERROT. Really, Pierrette! Do you consider that fitting language to use before this simple girl?

PIERRETTE [*bursting into tears*] Pierrot! Oh, Pierrot!

PIERROT. Why! She's crying!

COLUMBINE. Pity her.

PIERROT. I pity her.

PIERRETTE [*in agony*] Pierrot! Pierrot!

PIERROT. I did n't know you were so beautiful, Columbine. There are little dreams upon your eyes . . . [*Pierrette looks up in blank amazement*] . . . and your mouth is entirely covered

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with little dreams. It seems to me too there are dreams in your hair. It seems to me all the dreams of all men are found in your hair—

COLUMBINE. Ah, you see? Was I not right about your better nature?

PIERROT. All my life I've sought the woman whose love, they say, would be wholly unlike the love of other women. One would never dare to love her as one loves other women—she is a woman I don't believe one would dare even to kiss— [*Pierrette, having in this brief space reached the farthest limits of combined astonishment and disillusion, covers her face in her hands, and, unnoticed, runs wailing away.*]

COLUMBINE [*timidly*] Pierrot—I—I've been thinking about that . . .

PIERROT [*breathlessly*] Columbine!

COLUMBINE [*evading his rush at her*] Oh, Pierrot! For shame! Besides, I don't know what you are talking about. I must permit nothing of the sort until you have done something for me to make you worthy of it.

PIERROT. No, Columbine! Now! We can save all that for later on!

COLUMBINE. Look, Pierrot— [*she offers herself, lips and all*] I am only a weak and simple girl. I—I trust you. [*He is ashamed—poor Pierrot!*]

PIERROT. You are right Columbine. . . . That is not what I want. . . .

COLUMBINE. How fine and strong you are!

PIERROT [*humbly*] Only tell me what I must do— [*heroically*] Nothing shall stop me!

THE MOURNER

COLUMBINE. Often when I have sat alone, Pierrot, I've thought of the happiness that is up in that moon —

PIERROT. But there's nothing up in that moon, Columbine! Nothing but a little evil shadow — which you can *see*!

COLUMBINE. Ah, no, Pierrot, there's happiness — such happiness as may not be found in all the world, and I could only watch and wonder. Yet I knew all the while that one day you would bring it down to me — [*Pierrot is silent. Columbine steals closer. Dreamily, contagiously, dangerously.*] Then you will sit at your side of the hearth, and I shall sit at mine, and our happiness from up in the moon will sit between us — singing in the firelight!

PIERROT. But — won't that be a little dull?

COLUMBINE. Pierrot! What might I not think of you — if I didn't understand your better nature.

PIERROT. I am sick of my better nature. I want — I want — Oh, come with me, Columbine! For somewhere they still must live, the ones they have driven away — always, just beyond the hill-tops, lingers the gleam of their nakedness — my body has found the sea still quivering where their shining images have passed — and my ears have surprised laughter left on the wind where goddesses have fled buckling up their girdles —

COLUMBINE. Hush, Pierrot! I see somebody coming! . . . Suppose it were your parents, and they'd hear you talking like that! Oh, Pierrot!

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I believe it *is* your parents! They'll be here to see you — when you climb to the moon!

PIERROT. But, Columbine, I didn't say . . . [*He breaks off, for he is face to face with his father. Pantaloon and Pierrot's mother have come into the scene.*]

MOTHER [*running to Pierrot, and embracing him*] My boy! My boy! Isn't he fine-looking, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. He is very fine-looking. Oh, Madam, I blush!

PIERROT. Er — it's a pleasant afternoon, father —

PANTALOON. It's the middle of the night.

COLUMBINE. Will you believe me, sir, Pierrot has just been telling me he's thinking very seriously of climbing to the moon.

PIERROT [*swaggering*] Oh, yes, it's quite true I have it under consideration — but I think I shall wait yet a little while —

PANTALOON. So when people say to me, "What are you going to make of your Pierrot?" I may continue to answer, "At present he is very graceful at swimming and diving"? No, Listen to me, my son! I've entirely too much to attend to —

MOTHER [*placidly*] We shall wait yet a little while. He's too young. And one never knows what nonsense may befall him when he is out of my sight. Besides, it's cold in the moon, and he has forgotten to put on his woolen underwear — tell me not you have it on! For I found it beside your bed.

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PIERROT. Ah, you see, sir, I could n't possibly go just now. It would distress my mother.

PANTALOOON. Your mother must forever oppose me. It is her custom. Nor is she ever willing to improve her mind. One would say that she, no more than you, had the least idea what the moon is made of, when I've told you both repeatedly it is made of solid gold!

PIERROT. But, after all, father, is that of so very great consequence?

PANTALOOON. Has he learned no respect for *any*-thing! It will buy you a place in the world—where they'll invite us to eat at the tables of the mighty, and we can be seen side-by-side with the great!

MOTHER. Ah-h-h-h!

PIERROT. But the great are all so [*he thrusts his thumbs into his arm-pits and puffs out his cheeks*] woof-woof-woof!

PANTALOOON. The great are the great! [*Piously.*] And one does n't sneer at things of this nature.

MOTHER. For once your father has said a wise thing.

PIERROT. Mother!

MOTHER. You know Madam Philomena, who is my best friend? My very best friend among women, and she's always making some slighting remark in a way which possibly you wouldn't understand. But in this case she'll be curious and say, "How do they among the mighty? What garments do they wear, and what foods do they eat, and their manner of doing is very fine, is it

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not?" And I shall make some slighting remark, and perhaps wave my fan — after the manner of the women among the mighty. In a word; the great are not to be sneered at, and your father is older than you are, and I must not let them say your mother made you afraid.

COLUMBINE. Oh, if you think he is *afraid*, I can assure you that you are mistaken. *I know!* [*She whispers something into Pierrot's ear.*]

PIERROT [*looking away*] No, I haven't forgotten.

COLUMBINE. And you aren't *afraid*, are you, Pierrot? I'll never believe *you* are afraid!

PIERROT. Oh, why ever was I born like this! [*He takes off his shoes and places one foot on the lowest rung of the ladder. For a moment he is motionless. Then, suddenly, he turns.*] No! What I want is here, calling to me from every side! Its breath is upon my flesh, my life is alive inside me, crying an answer from out of my veins, and I'll never go! [*He pulls on his shoes with brave finality—one shoe.*] Never! [*The other shoe.*] Even if you kill me!

PANTALON. With all the expensive education I've wasted upon him! Very well, this is the end. Tomorrow I make a new will. Let him never enter my house again.

COLUMBINE. Oh, Pierrot! Whatever did I do to make you so willfully deceive me! [*Pierrot looks wretchedly from one to the other as they move away.*]

PIERROT. Mother! Even you!

MOTHER. No, Pierrot! Although you know

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how, when we are at home, he'll blame me with all this and leave me no peace. But I suffered in order to give you life, and I must continue to suffer because of you—and it doesn't matter. . . . There's something I've forgotten to do. . . . Ah, I remember! And tomorrow you must come to the back door. It's a place in your trousers that wants mending.

PANTALOOON. Madam, why must you forever make me appear unreasonable? I've wanted nothing that was not for his own good. But when I talked he stood there silent, and would not answer nor let me see his eyes, and how could I ever know his thoughts or what he wanted?

PIERROT. Then shall I tell you what I want? Do you mean I may really tell you? [*He comes with outstretched arms toward the foot-lights, lifting his face in ecstasy.*] I want—[*his face becomes more rapt than ever.*] I want—[*Pause. The light fades from Pierrot's face. His arms sink to his sides.*]

COLUMBINE [*crimson with blushes*] Yes, Pierrot?

PIERROT [*hoarsely*] I—don't—know—what I—want? [*He covers his face with his arms, and turns desperately to the ladder sobbing.*] Oh, I'll go! I'll go! You'll see! [*He snatches off his shoes and flings himself up the ladder.*]

MOTHER. No! No! Some accident will happen!

PANTALOOON. Leave the boy in peace, now that you have reason to be proud of him.

COLUMBINE. Once I thought perhaps he did not love me. [*Pierrot's head and shoulders are*

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out of sight when he makes a false step, slips from one rung to another, and all but falls. He hugs the ladder, shivering against it.]

THE VOICE of Pierrot [*screaming*] I can't go any further!

MOTHER. Come down from there, Pierrot! I knew some accident would happen! [*One of Pierrot's feet reaches down, groping about with its toes. It misses the rung below, and flings about wildly. Desperately, it is withdrawn to its former position.*]

VOICE [*In mortal terror*] I can't go down! I cannot go down!

PANTALOOON. Look up, Pierrot! The moon!

COLUMBINE. Yes, Pierrot! The moon.

[*Whereupon Pierrot's body straightens, the certainty of new strength manifest in every line.*]

VOICE. Ah-h-h-h! There is a woman in the moon —

MOTHER. Didn't I tell you some nonsense would befall him?

VOICE. She is not like any woman in all the world —

COLUMBINE. Pierrot! You know a really modest woman would never be seen in the moon!

VOICE. There are little dreams upon her eyes, her mouth is entirely covered with them, and her hair is filled with all the dreams of all men — [*The feet take a step upward.*]

COLUMBINE. What if she is really beautiful! Oh! Oh! It is the way of those women!

VOICE. She is letting down her hair to me!

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[*The feet take another step.*] It is streaming down to me like the blessed rain in April! [*Another step.*] Only a little more and I shall cover my face in its dreams! [*The feet disappear, leaping nimbly up the ladder.*] Only a little more . . . [*His great shout is lost in the distance above. Their heads go farther and farther back.*]

PANTALON. Do you see how fast my son climbs? I didn't know he was so powerful a man!

MOTHER. Why does he take so long? My boy! My little boy!

COLUMBINE. He is only a tiny fleck against the moon —

MOTHER. I cannot see. . . . I can no longer see at all. . . .

COLUMBINE [*bitterly*] He is with her, that woman in the moon. [*A distant yell, smothering into silence. Pause. The body of Pierrot hurtles headlong down the ladder, and lies, a crumpled heap, upon the ground.*]

MOTHER [*throwing herself on her knees at its side*] Pierrot! Pierrot! . . . Speak to me! [*Reassuringly.*] It is your mother, Pierrot. [*Desperately.*] Why does n't he speak to me!

COLUMBINE. His hands are growing cold.

MOTHER. Pierrot! Pierrot! It was by accident I forgot that place in your trousers. Forgive me, Pierrot! Oh, why don't you say you forgive me?

COLUMBINE. His hands are like ice.

PANTALON [*dully*] But it's not my fault. How could anybody have foreseen all this?

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MOTHER. Oh, he is dead! Pierrot is dead. My little boy is dead.

PANTALOOON. But it's not every man's son who has climbed to the moon.

MOTHER. Did I not say there was something terrible in the moon? No! No! I didn't say it. I said some accident would happen!

PANTALOOON. He is a hero! We must erect his image in a public place!

COLUMBINE. Yes! Yes! He is a hero! Oh, it's splendid to have been loved by a hero!

MOTHER. Here are his shoes. They are much too large. His feet were very small when they trampled in my lap.

PANTALOOON. No, the world will erect an image to him—the world will erect an image to our Pierrot!

[A sound from the sky like the cackling of a gigantic hen. Mephistopheles comes running down the ladder and halts half-way, laughing in mockery.]

MEPHISTO. Ho! Ho! Heroes! I adore these heroes! If only you knew what killed your hero—it was nothing so very terrible!

MOTHER. You know what killed my boy? You know! You know!

PANTALOOON. We are respectable people, sir! You have no right to grin at us like that.

MOTHER. You understand, sir, there was something I forgot to do. I assure you I would have done it, and you can see you must tell me. He was my little boy.

MEPHISTO. He found—*[he chuckles]* he found

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that the moon — [*he laughs*] Are you sure you'd really like to know what he found?

MOTHER. No! No! I could not bear it!

MEPHISTO. THE MOON IS NOTHING BUT A PIECE OF GREEN CHEESE!

[*The cloudy blue curtains fall swiftly together. The house-lights are turned on. Applause from those of us who, whether we like the performance or not, burst automatically into spasms of hand-clapping every time we see a curtain fall. To which hastily enters Mephistopheles, the Epilogue, from between the cloudy blue curtains, frenziedly shaking the palm of his hand at us.*]

EPILOGUE. SH-H-H-H!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The show's not over yet!

[*A perfectly tailored, irascible Old Gent in morning-coat and striped trousers rises to his feet from a seat near the center aisle. He has refused to surrender his great-coat, top-hat, and silver headed walking-stick to the expensive inconvenience of the cloak-room; and it is with both arms full that he begins shoving his way toward the aisle amid indignant murmurs of protest from those of us whose knees he is jostling while the rest of us blush vicariously. Although he had eaten entirely too much up to the time when he first saw he was going to have to reduce, he is exceedingly well set up; and, despite a little vagueness as to waist-line, his figure is not at all bad. He wears an iron-grey moustache cropped in a straight line, and manages to look remarkably like the portrait of himself he has hanging in his*

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office—perhaps for his own encouragement. Who knows?]

OLD GENT [*grumbling in an angry undertone, expressly loud enough for everybody to overhear*] Go as far as you like. . . . I'm hanged if I see any more of it. . . . I came here to see a show with some sort of sense to it—

EPILOGUE [*deeply troubled*] I—I'm sorry, sir. . . . [*The Old Gent looks up. He had hoped for the pleasure of publicly venting his spleen without the embarrassment of being called publicly to account.*] I took care at the beginning to explain that there was n't supposed to be any sense to it—it's too bad you didn't leave then.

OLD GENT [*In the aisle and brandishing his walking-stick*] I'm in the habit of staying when I please and leaving when I—[*exploding*] Did you ever hear of such a thing! And a damned actor, beside! [*He stamps his stick rapidly on the floor of the aisle.*] I'll—just—be—

EPILOGUE. I—I beg pardon, sir—there are ladies present.

OLD GENT. Why did n't you think of that when you had that brazen little hussy begging that young idiot to kiss her? In his pajamas, too!

EPILOGUE. I'm awfully sorry, sir, that you didn't approve of the play—

OLD GENT. Play! Play! Do you call the whining of that young idiot a *play*? Romantic, fancy-dress, infernal, idiotic moon-light and poppy-cock! That's what I call it! Let me tell you right here, young man, this world is hard

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and real, and you can't buck up against this world with any such flummery as that in your system. Oh, I used to be a young fool myself—not that I'm what you'd call "old" now, mind you. But where do you think I'd be if I had n't seen through all that clap-trap stuff? I'll wager *you* don't even know who I am. Even if you'd seen my picture in the paper last Sunday, *you* wouldn't remember it! But I—control—the—price—on every alarm-clock sold in America! For instance if I say they'll be two dollars and sixty-nine cents—

EPILOGUE [*hastily*] Excuse me, sir, I'm very sorry, sir. But. . . . Well you see, it's about to begin again.

OLD GENT. Then let it begin again. But in Heaven's name wait 'til I'm out the door!

EPILOGUE. Will you excuse me again, sir? I was about to suggest. . . . Er—if you will just take your seat again, we can act out the rest of it behind the curtain, so you won't have to see any of it.

[*The music of Gounod's "Marche Funébre d'une Marionette" has begun to play behind the scenes.*]

OLD GENT [*suspiciously*] What's that music playing for!

EPILOGUE. It's a funeral march. That's the way the next part of the play begins.

OLD GENT [*advancing down the aisle*] What have you got going on behind that curtain!

EPILOGUE. Why—why—just the regular show.

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OLD GENT. Now there's no use denying it—you've got something going on back there you don't want me to see!

EPILOGUE. No sir! I assure you, sir!

OLD GENT. You're ashamed to let me see what's going on behind that curtain—and *don't attempt to contradict me!*

EPILOGUE. Well, if you absolutely refuse to take my word for it—I don't believe anybody would object if you were to climb up here and see for yourself.

OLD GENT. Young man! Are you trying to bluff *me!* [*Snorting.*] Hah! Well, you're not the first to try it. Here, take this coat. [*He hands the great-coat up to Mephistopheles and makes uncertain gestures with his hands, of which one is encumbered with his walking-stick and the other with his top-hat. He ends by putting the hat on his head, grasping the edge of the stage with his free hand, and trying, ineffectually, to climb up.*]

EPILOGUE. Just give me your hand, sir.

[*The Old Gent awkwardly extends the hand which holds the stick, and Mephistopheles pulls him up. The moment the Old Gent is well on the stage the house-lights begin imperceptibly to dim until only the foot-lights are left burning.*]

OLD GENT. Anh-hanh! you thought I wouldn't do it. Or maybe you thought I couldn't, eh! Efficiency, young man, efficiency! Life is real and life is earnest, and a man's got to keep fit for the job. Regular exercise every

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day, that's what does it! A glass of hot water before breakfast, and eat *bran*!

[*In the present pause, as the Old Gent, having pronounced on one of his favorite subjects, tucks his chin into his collar and stands there looking very military and self-satisfied, we begin to wonder if we do not detect a sinister glint kindling in the eyes of Mephistopheles, and an ominous crouch subtly insinuating itself into his bearing. Is it possible that this person, whom we have taken for a rather nice young man playing the part of Mephistopheles, has been in reality playing the part of a rather nice young man? His voice, however, does nothing toward settling the point.*]

EPILOGUE. Well, have you seen anything I might want to hide from you?

[*The Old Gent starts sheepishly, takes the edges of the curtains in his hands, and is about to part them. Instead he wheels suddenly upon Mephistopheles.*]

OLD GENT. Look here, young fellow, I warn you right now, if it's what I think it is, I'll have you arrested! [*He pokes his head between the curtains, only to withdraw it again—astonished, crest-fallen, and bewildered.*] What have they got him on that stretcher for?

EPILOGUE. Pierrot, you mean?

OLD GENT. Young idiot that fell off that ladder. [*He pokes his head in again, and again withdraws it.*] Humph! They're carrying him away on the stretcher, and all the others are following along behind. It looks almost as if it might be some funny kind of funeral. . . . [*With*

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the awe of one for whom the fact just dawning in his mind is beginning to have a particular and heart-tightening significance.] You don't mean he is really dead!

EPILOGUE. Yes, Pierrot is dead. And that is his funeral.

OLD GENT [*clearing his throat a little too heartily*] Well, the grave is not its goal! Besides, that's about the most ridiculous funeral I've ever seen. [*He is about to peek in again when suddenly the house-lights go entirely out. In their turn the foot-lights begin to dim—imperceptibly. Behind the scenes the music approaches continually nearer and nearer.*]

EPILOGUE. Ah! But you don't yet know the cream of the jest! [*The Old Gent wheels suspiciously.*] The cream of the jest is that you — [*grinning*] you are the very most grief-stricken mourner at that funeral!

OLD GENT. Nonsense! I'm a respectable man of affairs!

EPILOGUE [*drawing closer to him*] It's you, yourself, they are carrying away to the burial — you [*sadly shaking his head and sighing*] who died so young —

OLD GENT [*startled*] Why — why — of all the preposterous — [*A deep-toned bell tolls out in the distance. At the sound the Old Gent has to combat a certain nervousness about what he may have let himself in for.*] When here I am, right here! Alive as you are — if not more so!

EPILOGUE. But my dear sir! You can't ex-

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pect me to consider that — [*a nod of his head includes the chesty old fellow from tip to toe*] or any part of its life — as *real*! [*The Old Gent gapes in astonishment.*] Why, they are bearing the *real* you off on that litter!

OLD GENT. But it is real! I am real! Real as — as — [*The bell tolls again — nearer. It is approaching. The Old Gent takes himself in hand.*] Don't be ridiculous! [*He clasps his hands on the head of his stick, and tries, with remarkable success, to resemble a bronze statue of a member of the Cabinet.*]

EPILOGUE. Oh, I know, I know — you've got to say that! [*Grinning.*] To save your heart from breaking.

OLD GENT. Nonsense! And besides, you're getting damned impertinent!

EPILOGUE. But can you entirely silence a squeaking misgiving that you have never known reality? [*The bell tolls.*] That all you have ever had has been only a part in that pinchbeck illusion you found ready-made among men — and finally had to accept as reality? That even the person who stands there — er, pardon me, behaving like that — is an utterly fictitious character you've trumped up yourself to give yourself importance in the illusion? [*The bell tolls.*] And with all of it, you have never had anything the *real* you wanted!

OLD GENT. Nonsense! I always get what I want! [*The bell tolls.*] It — it's the kind of a man I am!

EPILOGUE. No doubt you *can* convince your-

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self *now*. But — [*grinning*] when you are alone with yourself in the night —

OLD GENT. Nothing of the sort! A man's a fool to think of such things! A fool! They're nothing but nonsense — damned nonsense! And I — [*the bell tolls*] I won't have it!

EPILOGUE [*grinning*] Ah, pound that stick, sir! Pound it just as you pound it on the pavement — when you walk alone with yourself in the night! [*The bell tolls.*] But can you banish the frightening memories of the raw splendor of Reality you once could glimpse by searing flashes, towering in excitement somewhere beyond? [*The bell tolls.*] Or the terrifying suspicion that all that was real in you died with your last rebel hope of breaking through to that fierce splendor?

OLD GENT. You lie! You lie! I've had everything! *Everything!* [*Mephistopheles grins. The bell booms out surprisingly near at hand. The Old Gent's voice rises to an aged querulous scream, as he shakes his fists, one of which clutches his stick, threateningly above his head.*] You lie! You lie, I tell you! you lie! *you lie!*
YOU LIE!

EPILOGUE. *Hush!* They are passing with the dead.

[*The Old Gent hesitates with his arms upraised. As the foot-lights go entirely out, the cloudy blue curtains part, and the music rolls out full force. The bell tolls steadily on. The ladder and the moonlight have disappeared.*

As the procession enters in silhouette against the night sky, the Old Gent, also in silhouette,

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slowly lowers his arms. He uncovers, and respectfully bows his head.

A Cowled Mute carrying a dim lantern. Two other Cowled Mutes bearing on their shoulders the litter on which is stretched the body of Pierrot. It is covered with a voluminous white pall trailing at each side. The first Mute stands aside until the procession has passed. One after the other, two women, silently—mourning. Black veils are on their heads, and black veils trail from them as they walk. They carry tall burning candles which slant forward in the gloom. A man enveloped in a huge black cloak, one end of which is thrown over his head, the other trailing on the ground. Another woman. She lags. Her veils are carelessly arranged, and the light of her candle has gone out. Save for the white-painted face of Pierrot dead upon the litter, no faces can be seen.

The procession has entirely passed. The remaining Mute is impatient to be off. The Old Gent turns slowly, and always uncovered, follows the procession into the growing darkness. His back is bent, his step uncertain, and his fingers grasp the brim of his hat in a curiously childish grip. The Mute turns in after him.

Mephistopheles remains in silhouette, holding the great-coat in his folded arms. His head shakes a little above it, as he snickers audibly after the procession. The sounds of the bell and the music die away, and the last faint glow of light disappears. In the pitch-black darkness, the snicker of Mephistopheles grows into loud,

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uncontrollable, screaming laughter — such laughter as none of us in the audience will ever forget as long as we live.

The lights blaze on all over the theatre, and we blink our eyes in the sudden brilliance to find that — THE ordinary CURTAIN of the house HAS FALLEN.]

BROTHERHOOD

BY

WILLIAM H. WELLS

CHARACTERS

PETE
FRIEDMAN
PITTSBURGH
JOE
HEINY
LOUIS
THE CAPTAIN
NICHOLAS
WATCHMAN

First produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club at Agassiz House Theatre January 25 and 26, 1924.

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BROTHERHOOD

The curtain rises on an old, wooden New York dock. Against it is tied a large, black tramp-freighter, a portion of whose side fills the entire back of the stage. The rusty black side of the ship is lightened by two or three large patches of red-lead paint. Leading diagonally up the side of the ship toward the spectator's right is a heavy accommodation-ladder, swung just clear of the string-piece of the dock. Inside the string-piece, on the left, is a rusty iron bit over which is thrown the loop of the tarry, stern spring-line. This leads off toward the left. Four men are seated on the dock, shivering once in a while when a gust of November wind swoops down between the ship and the dock-shed. On the bit sits a burly, blonde Swede without a hat. At his right, on a low box is a thin, pasty-faced, fairly young Jew. At his left, an American of thirty-five, gaunt and with a very hard face, is sitting on a small block of wood, leaning against the bit with his head sunk forward. Hunched on the string-piece of the dock, a little to the left of the ladder is an old, medium-sized, and very ugly Swede. The clothes of all are semi-respectable, rather worn, but obviously not working clothes. Pete, the old Swede, who is the shabbiest, wears a dirty officer's cap on one side of his head and no

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collar or necktie. The American, Pittsburgh, is wearing a blue shirt with a twisted tie and on his head is a greasy, oiler's cap. Heiny, the big hatless Swede, has on an extremely dirty high stiff collar and a badly tied string tie. The Jew, who is called by his last name, Friedman, wears a loud blue and green cap and a khaki flannel shirt, the collar fastened high round his neck with a safety pin.

Pete speaks. He talks somewhat thickly and has a way of talking more to himself than his hearers.

PETE. Dot's funny dot Looey ain' roun' here yet dis morning.

FRIEDMAN. Yeah—but where's Joe?

HEINY. Ond Gus, too.

PETE. Goos vos droonk las' night. Vere 'e gets da money for viskey dese strike times, huh?

HEINY. Ya—vere *you* get it, Pete, huh?

PITTS. [*harshly*] Y' old squareheaded souse. What you've got signed up on the book'll take you three years at sea to pay.

FRIEDMAN. It's a good thing for her yu never had no wife lookin' for your money to keep 'er.

PETE. Vife?—sure I got vife. Vone, two—by golly, I got tree vife! Vone in Stockholm ond . . .

PITTS. Wherever they are, you can be certain they depend on somethin' besides you for a livin'. [*Friedman laughs shrilly.*] Well! What's so funny? What have you got to laugh at?

FRIEDMAN. Aw—wotsa matter wid you?

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[*Pittsburg pays no attention. Turning to Heiny and speaking in a lowered voice.*] Wot's that guy Pittsburg on 'is ear about now, Heiny, hey?

PITTS. What's 'at?

FRIEDMAN. Nothin', nothin'.

PITTS. What?

FRIEDMAN. Aw — wot d' y' wanna jump down a guy's throat fer alla time?

PITTS. Oh —

FRIEDMAN. Wota y' always so sore about; somebody run off with your wife?

PITTS. [*fiercely*] Shut your mouth, you greasy —

HEINY. Hey, Pittsboorg, fot in hell's da matter vit you. You ain't never even had a vife — had you?

PITTS. Yeah! I had one.

[*Friedman opens his mouth to speak.*]

PITTS. No! she did n' run away with nobody neither.

PETE. You say you got a vife, Peetsboorg?

PITTS. No, I did n'.

FRIED. Well 'en —

HEINY. Vot she do — die?

PITTS. What? — Yeah.

HEINY. Yoost lately? [*Pittsburg shakes his head. Grunts.*]

HEINY. She leave you any — [*He stretches out his hand.*]

PITTS. [*shaking his head again*] Naw —

HEINY. How long she —

PITTS. [*holding up both hands*] Ten years.

HEINY. Ya?

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PITTS. Yeah. Back in nineteen-thirteen when a big strike was on. You could n't get no kind of a job nowheres.

HEINY. Ya, I know. Dot's too damn baad.

FRIED. Aw, . . . Hell . . . , I didn't know nuthin' about that, did I?

PITTS. No, you didn't. An' now you can forget you ever heard it. What's the matter with them guys that they ain't showed up yet this mornin'?

FRIED. Geezis, yu don't think they'll turn scabs on us, do yu?

PETE. Huh? Not Goos and Looy. I know dose fellas. Back on a ol' barkantine in Shanghai I meet Goos; ond den las' trip she sank Looy vos svimmin' dere alongside da boat—ya— [*His voice trails off in a mumble of reminiscence.*]

HEINY. Yoe von' never scab neither.

FRIED. Yer damn right Joe won't. Wy should 'e—ain' 'e a delegate; ain't 'a union payin' 'im good money? He ain' got no *reason* to scab, anyhow.

HEINY. By golly! you don' tank maybe dey call da strike off, hey?

PITTS. Suppose they have—there ain't nobody goin' to get jobs on this tub ahead of us is there?

HEINY. No, dot's right.

PITTS. But don't worry. They haven' called it off—not yet. This ain't gonna be like the last strike: fifteen weeks, an' then get rooked at the end of it. This time we stay out till we get what we want.

BROTHERHOOD

PETE. Vee got to do more. To strike ain't enough. Vee got to fight da dom lousy copitalists — yooost like in Rooshia now —

[*Joe and Louis arrive on the dock. Joe, who precedes the other, is a fairly young New York roughneck. His clothes are in better condition than those of any of the other men. Louis is a fat, cheerful-faced German with a small grey moustache.*]

FRIED. Here 'ey are. Say, Joe —

JOE. Hi! You guys think I was n' gonna show up 'is mornin'.

PITTS. Nope.

LOUIS. Vee been down to strike headquarters — Votayou tink — hey — *maybe* dis afternoon da strike is off.

PITTS. [*to Joe*] Zat straight?

JOE. 'At 's vot everybody down there is sayin'. There 's a big conference bein' pulled off now.

HEINY. Vell, it's about *time* vee get a yob, hey? Four mont — no — dot 's too dom long time to strike.

PITTS. A year ain't too long if we win.

PETE. Yah! *If* vee do?

JOE. Y' ain't seen no scabs hangin' aroun' here this mornin' have yu? Down to Pier thirty-six I heard there was five birds rushed the ship there. Two of 'em got aboard. 'Ey hadda scrape the other three up offa the dock.

PITTS. There ain't been none around here.

FRIED. Dere won't be neither, if they ain't lookin' fur somepn they don't wan'. Ain't 'at so, Joe?

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JOE. You'd trow dem off all right. [*He crosses to Friedman who is sitting on the box.*] Say, stand up here a secon'. [*Friedman somewhat puzzled, stands. Joe bends quickly down and removes the box. Friedman grasps his wrist.*]

FRIED. Say — wot the —

JOE [*in a laughing tone that brooks no contradiction*] Lay off, kiddo.

FRIED. 'At's my box.

JOE. Not now, it ain't.

FRIED. Come off; gimme it.

JOE [*as if his request were utterly preposterous*] Wo-o-o-t?

FRIED. Aw — wy did n' y' say y' wanned it 'en?

JOE [*walking off with it*] I did n' hafta. I knoo you wanned me to have it. [*Having set down the box, he seats himself upon it.*] Siddown! Be comfortable. [*Friedman sits down beside the bit leaning against it and Heiny's legs. Louis sits down on the string-piece of the dock, under the accommodation-ladder. Joe produces a bag of tobacco and a package of cigarette papers. He looks about him, well aware that he is the only one who has any tobacco; then rolls himself a cigarette.*]

JOE [*as he licks it*] Smoke?

FRIED. Yeah, sure! [*He jumps up from his seat by the bit and is by Joe in an instant.*]

JOE [*paying no attention to him*] Smoke, Louis?

LOUIS [*producing a large bulldog pipe*] Shoor; give it here.

BROTHERHOOD

JOE. That's a hell of a big pipe you smoke. Here. [*Turning to Friedman.*] You wanna roll one? Wait a secon'.

[*Pete scrapes with his thumb a morsel from his scanty store of Copenhagen snuff and settles down to chewing. Friedman rolls his cigarette. Heiny lumbers over to get paper, tobacco and a light. They both resume their seats.*]

JOE [*taking a deep puff*] O, Pittsburg, ain't yu gonna have a smoke?

PITTS. Yeah — all right — chuck it over.

JOE [*holding the bag and papers a little in front of him*] Here, here y' are.

PITTS. Chuck it.

JOE. Naw, here; it might spill.

PITTS. Chuck it.

JOE. Well, if yu don' wan' it enough to come an' take it — [*Friedman steps over to Joe.*]

FRIED. Gimme it. I'll take it to 'im.

JOE [*after a second's hesitation*] Awrigh'.

FRIED [*hands it to Pittsburg*] Here y' are.

[*Pittsburgh thanks him sharply. He rolls himself a cigarette, slips the papers into the bag and throws it back to Joe. He gets a light from Heiny. The captain of the ship, a large Irishman, appears on the dock and heads for the ladder. He walks by the men as if they were scum, and they, from habit, draw aside, very little, for him. On the string-piece by the foot of the ladder he stops and removes the cigar stump from between his teeth.*]

CAPT. Say, I could use half a dozen of you on board there.

BROTHERHOOD

JOE. Yeah?

CAPT. Look here, I've got a proposition —

PITTS. We don't want to hear no propositions.

CAPT. Well this one don't come from me, young fellow. I don't ask seamen, I tell them. But a pack of soft fools in the office are willing to pay a bonus, big enough to make up wages to what they were before the cut came, to any seamen that signs up now.

JOE. Say, cap'n, you said ol' scale wages?

CAPT. I did.

JOE. A. B.'s and Ordinaries too?

CAPT. Yes.

JOE [*suspiciously*] Watch an' watch?

CAPT. *Three* watches. They're the things you're striking for, ain't they?

HEINY. Yah.

JOE. Need a bosun?

CAPT. Yes, take the job?

PITTS. No! 'e won't.

JOE. Wot the blazes have you got to say about it? [*To the group.*] Lissen here; this here company's smart enough to see they're gonna lose in 'e end. They'll give us wot we're askin' for *now*, to save time. All right — wotaya say?

FRIED. Let's go! [*He starts to rise.*]

HEINY [*pushing him down*] Si' down. Cap-tain —

CAPT. [*sharply*] Well?

LOUIS. You say vee get extra pay, enough for —

PITTS. [*rising suddenly to his feet and inter-*

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rupting] Looka here, it don't make no difference how much we get; we don't take no jobs—see. [*Louis sighs and shakes his head. Turning fiercely on the men.*] Whatsa matter with you guys—what d' y' strike for? Let a guy buy you out like that? Let 'im bribe you? [*To the captain.*] Think you can pay us to crawl out on the rest of the gang—scab on 'em. Like hell! We're on strike, get me—[*menacingly*] an' if there's any guy here that don't know it——. We ain't strikin' for the fun of it. We got rights, get me, an' we ain't sellin' out to no skipper, nor company either. Get me?

HEINY. Yah, dot's right; dot's right, Pitts-boorg.

FRIED. You tell 'em.

CAPT. [*to Joe*] How about you, young fellow?

JOE [*who had hoped to avoid this*] Who, me?

CAPT. You! You going to take the bosun's job? You afraid of *him*?

JOE. Naw! I ain't. An' I ain't gonna take yur job, an' I never was. Yu might as well go up that ladder. It ain't gonna do you no good to stan' here talkin' t' us. I'm a delegate from 'e union, see? An' I'm tellin' yu.

CAPT. *All right!* Take it from me, young fellows; when this strike is over your wages'll be so small that you'll have to be paid off in pennies to make it look as if you'd got something. [*The captain, disgusted, goes aboard. There follows a short silence broken by Joe.*]

JOE. That's a hot one: tryin' to pull any stuff like that with us.

BROTHERHOOD

PITTS. Yeah—

JOE. It don' go aroun' here. He can go tell 'e owners where they can go.

HEINY } Ya.

FRIED } 'At's right.

PETE. } Uhhh. [*Louis shrugs his shoulders and turning spits into the water.*]

PITTS. Ye-e-e-s. You told 'im all about it.

[*There is another silence in which Joe rolls himself another cigarette, but having little tobacco offers no one else a smoke, although their cigarette butts have all been thrown away,—that is, all but Friedman's, which has been carefully pocketed. Pete begins singing mournfully to himself. Nicholas, a lean Austrian-Pole with a swarthy complexion and bristling black moustache, comes on the dock. He is rather shaky; dressed in very shabby clothes, his feet bound round with burlap. On his head is a dirty bandage. His manner is hesitant. Joe, whose back is toward him, does not see him. The other men glance silently up, eyeing him, yet seeming scarcely to see him, like a pack of dogs at the approach of a strange dog. Noticing their action, Joe twists his head round to regard the man who has halted uncertainly a few feet behind him. Joe turns away impassively, spits, and resumes his cigarette.*]

FRIED. [*leaning forward*] Say—Joe, give us a drag, will yu?

[*Joe picks the cigarette from his lips and half-contemptuously holds it out. Friedman crosses to him and takes it with brief thanks. He stands*

BROTHERHOOD

puffing slowly, blowing the smoke out toward Nicholas and staring at him coldly. After a moment Joe demands the return of his cigarette. Friedman goes back to the bit. Nicholas moves hesitatingly near to where Louis is seated. He looks about and tries to smile.]

NICHOLAS. You fellas got — zhob — on board dis vagon?

JOE. Huh? Wotsat?

NICHOLAS. You voik — on he'?

JOE. } Vee *do* not.

HEINY. } No.

LOUIS. It looks like vee did — don't it?

FRIED. [*pugnaciously*] Da you?

NICHOLAS. No — me needer.

PETE. Vot you vant here?

JOE. Got a union card?

NICHOLAS. Yas. [*He makes no move to produce one.*]

JOE. On yu?

NICHOLAS. Yas.

JOE. Let's see it. I'm the union delegate here. [*Nicholas pulls out his union membership card and hands it to Joe. Joe scrutinizes it carefully.*] A. B., Jeenhafs; Nicholas Jeenhafs?

NICHOLAS. Yas — Jenhafz [*pronounced Yainhas*].

JOE. Yeah? Wot kind of a name d' y' call 'at; Wop?

NICHOLAS [*insulted*] No! — dot's Poland.

JOE [*in a conciliating tone*] Awright — here. [*He returns the card.*]

BROTHERHOOD

NICHOLAS [*with an effort to be agreeable*] It's goddame cold out today, hey?

HEINY. It ain't so cold like it gonna be.

NICHOLAS [*trying again*] Fell, it ain't so cold he' like outside dey in da street, hey?

FRIED. Yeah? It don't feel like no hot-house ta me.

NICHOLAS [*who has crossed to Pete, and is standing on the string-piece holding onto the bridle of the accommodation ladder*] No.

FRIED. Who cracked y' on the beezzer?

NICHOLAS [*putting his hand to his head*] Dot? I—I fall—cut like hell. [*He swings casually round the bridle, backing onto the first step of the ladder.*]

FRIED. Yeah?

NICHOLAS. Yas. Fot she name, dis ship, hey?

FRIED. Joopiter.

NICHOLAS. Hewpiter? [*As he speaks he turns and puts a foot on the second step of the ladder. Pittsburg, who has been watching him like a cat, springs upon him and grasps his arm.*]

NICHOLAS [*startled*] Fot's ta matter? [*Pittsburg makes no reply to his questions but eyes him coldly which makes Nicholas nervous.*]

NICHOLAS. Fot you vanta graab holta me like dot for, hey? [*After an instant's pause.*] Can't I sit on ta ladder he' if I vant? Le' go!

[*Pittsburgh drops his arm and turns away. Even as he steps down to the string-piece Nicholas essays a dash up the ladder. Pittsburgh, however, has suspected some such trick and as Joe yells . . . "Look Out! Get 'im!" Pittsburgh*

BROTHERHOOD

whirls back and throws himself upon Nick, jerking him backward down the ladder. Nicholas struggles weakly, but only for an instant, then realizing himself caught and outnumbered he becomes rigidly quiet in Pittsburg's tight grip. Friedman, Joe, Heiny, and Pete jump to their feet. Louis rises with less haste.]

PITTS. [*fiercely to Nicholas*] Well — ?

FRIED. Geeziz, I *tought* he looked like a scab. A dirty Pollock.

NICHOLAS [*choking with helpless fury*] Call me dot — you damn lousy Hew.

PITTS. Shut up! [*to Friedman*] you too!

JOE. Throw 'im out. Scab!

PITTS. Wait a second. [*Harshly to Nicholas.*] Say you, whatayou tryin' to sneak on board like that for, huh?

NICHOLAS [*doggedly*] I gotta have a zhob.

PITTS. I guess you gotta *don't*! Say, looka here [*sternly*] how d' y' get that crack on the head?

NICHOLAS. I fall.

PITTS. [*skeptically*] Yeah? You weren't tryin' to get a job on some other boat? Huh?

NICHOLAS [*resentfully*] Yas — I vas.

JOE. Yu crazy fool. You dead above 'e ears? There's a strike on, a strike, don't yu know wot that means?

NICHOLAS [*with desperation*] Know? Know? Yas, I know, strike, da whole damn time strike. Augoost, Septem'er, October, now November — STRIKE! No got a zhob, no monnay, clothes, food, nutting! 'Ow in hell can vee leef?

BROTHERHOOD

PITTS. We live, don't we; an' we ain't goin' around tryin' to scab.

NICHOLAS. Yas — you got a vife? [*Pittsburg shakes his head.*]

NICHOLAS. No! You got kids? No! You got only yourself?

JOE. You got a wife?

NICHOLAS. Yas — I got a vife. I got a little boy too, an' a little goil; an' my vife, she got a baby.

PITTS. [*with cruel deliberation*] You godt dam fool!

NICHOLAS [*fiercely*] Fot you call me: got dam fool? My vife seek — yas — seek vit da baby. She an' my kids — dey got notting to eat four days now. Hungry like hell — cry alla time. My vife — she maybe — die. [*Turning to Joe.*] You call me crasy fool for tryin' to get a zhob?

JOE. No, no. That sure is tough. Yeah, 'at's too damn bad.

PITTS. Too bad hell! [*He repulses Nicholas and Joe takes the Pole by the arm.*] You always been a seaman, ain't you?

NICHOLAS. Yas.

PITTS. What the devil did you get married for, then?

NICHOLAS. Fot you say?

PITTS. I said a seaman ain't got no damn business to get married — and if you didn' have no more sense 'an to do it you deserve everything 'at's comin' to you now. Get me?

JOE [*coming somewhat between Pittsburg and*

BROTHERHOOD

Nicholas] Lissen here. You belong to the union, *don't ya?*

NICHOLAS. Yas.

JOE. An' you wanna see da union win 'is strike.

NICHOLAS. Yas — but I —

JOE. Sure, I know yu do. Now looka here —

PITTS. [*pushing Joe to one side so that he can speak to Nicholas. Joe retains his grip on the Pole's arm, and Nicholas is not unwilling to stick close to him.*] Say you — how long you been married?

NICHOLAS [*sullenly*] Nine year now.

PITTS. Were you around at 'at strike in nineteen-thirteen?

NICHOLAS. Yas. Vas den I meet my vife.

PITTS. You saw what that strike was like — you knoo damn well another one would be just like it — an' you went an' got married! God, guys like you oughta get — [*he subsides suddenly.*]

JOE [*as Nicholas clings to him dizzily*] Wotsa matter, can't yu stand up?

NICHOLAS. Dot's my head, I guess. An' nutting to eat for four days; dot's not so good.

JOE [*seating him on the box where he slumps forward, one hand holding his head*] Si' down. There. — I know it's hard, ol' fella. But we gotta stick it out, see?

FRIED. Yeah, dat's right.

JOE. Every guy's gotta stick by all 'e other guys, see? You don' wanna be a scab. Wot you gotta give up for the strike now, maybe it hurts.

BROTHERHOOD

But in 'e end, we'll all be better off for stayin' with 'e union bunch, see?

NICHOLAS. Yas. But — my wife, she ain't better off.

PITTS. [*hotly*] Whady' wan' a wife for? A couple o' wives — half a dozen kids — let 'em die! Every man's got to give up *some*thin' for the sake of the whole bunch. Joe there'll tell you.

JOE. Can it. [*To Nicholas.*] You just lissen to me. Don't you feel so bad. The strike'll be over *today* — then you can get a job.

NICHOLAS. Yas. Dot's vot dey say all da time.

JOE. I know. But this time it's straight dope. You'll get a job all right, now don' worry. Just stick widda union.

NICHOLAS. Yas, I guess I do. I *got* to.

JOE. O hell — y' wan' to — y' know y' do.

NICHOLAS. Fell, I vould. Only I could n' get a zhob novere on shore. Ven a man got a family, he got to have a zhob.

PITTS. Don' have a fam'ly then!

NICHOLAS [*with bitter sarcasm*] Yas — I guess maybe dot's right — vit fellas like you. [*The dock watchman appears. He is just past middle age, fat and extremely ugly, wearing a long, rusty brown coat and a dirty grey felt hat. He is hard of hearing.*]

WATCH [*approaching the group with a pompous joviality*] Well, boys — what d' ye know? [*He places his hand behind his ear as Joe replies.*]

JOE. Not much. This guy thought he'd go aboard the ship fur a job.

BROTHERHOOD

WATCH. Huh? Job? Y' don't tell.

JOE. Yeah. We persuaded 'im not to though. He just did n' understan' what a strike meant.

WATCH. Huh? Wall-ll—I guess it don't much matter now whether 'e do or not.

PITTS. Yeah? How's 'at?

WATCH. Boys—the strike's—OFF!

JOE. Off, you say?

FRIED.. You were right.

PETE. Vell—vee get a yob, now.

PITTS. [*pushing forward*] Did we win? 'At's wot I wanna know.

WATCH. Not this time, boys.—They beat you.

PITTS. Wot—How d' y' know—Where d' y' get all 'is—hey. Who tol' yu HEY?

WATCH. Don't yell at me, boy—I got it on a telephone there straight from the steamship company.

PITTS. Rotten—lousy—yellow—sold us out!—Five months and 'ey sell us out. [*To Joe.*] That's yer union—That's they way they do.

JOE. We couldn't go on strike for ever—could we?

PITTS. Why not! Damn right we could. Don't tell me—them guys in 'a conference socked the boppoes all right. [*To Nicholas.*] Here's what you've been striking for—here's wot yer wife and kids is starving for—"Stick widda union" Blah—A lot a good it done us. We strike so that a bunch o' hogs can stick more money in their greasy pockets. [*Pulls out a card from his pocket and shoves it under Joe's nose.*]

BROTHERHOOD

See dat — Dat's my union card. [*Rips it up into small pieces.*] Yeah —

[*After listening for a moment or two — Louis first, then Pete go up the ladder. Friedman looks around, sees them, and follows quickly. Heiny starts after him. He has just put his foot on the ladder as Pittsburgh tears up his union card. Joe has a firm hand on Nicholas's arm. From the top of the ladder comes the harsh voice of the mate.*]

MATE. Say — how many more you fellows are there. I want five and 'at's all I want. You — squarehead in the collar there — Wanna job — Shake a leg then. [*Heiny hurries up the ladder.*] Come on, come on, one more — one o' you there — hurry it up. [*Joe, pushing Nicholas to one side, makes for the ladder. Pittsburg is on the bottom step at the same moment. Joe tries to push past him but is unable to, so he starts to argue.*]

PITTS. Why should you get a job instead of me, huh?

JOE. Why in hell should n't I?

PITTS. Because I'm a better man. See?

JOE. Ain't I the union delegate here?

PITTS. What of it? You an' your damn union. It's on account o' guys like you that we lost this strike. Suckers like you — out for what they can get out of it — sellin' out on us!

JOE. Well I did n' have nothin' to do wid 'at.

PITTS. No? You wish you had though. I know you, you lousy — [*He turns to go up the*

BROTHERHOOD

ladder. Joe grasps his coat.] Take your dirty hands off my coat. Get down from this here ladder! [To Nicholas who has approached the ladder.] Keep out o' this you.

[Nicholas draws slightly to one side. Joe backs down before Pittsburg's fists. At the same time he covertly draws from his back pocket a big, patent, self-opening knife, snaps it open; and as he steps back onto the dock suddenly lets drive at Pittsburgh. Pittsburg's right fist shoots straight out at Joe's face, landing with added force because of his higher position on the string-piece. Joe goes out cold. Pittsburg picks up the knife, drops it into the water under the dock where it lands with a faint plop (pail behind the scenes), and goes up the ladder. During the fight the watchman has stood at a safe distance. When Joe dropped, he disappeared from sight. After a moment Nicholas follows Pittsburg. When he is part way up the ladder the mate yells at him.]

MATE. Hey you! You lookin' for a job?

NICHOLAS. Yos, yos.

MATE. Well beat it. Go on—vamoose. Didn't y' hear me say five men. We got 'em. D' y' hear me? I said beat it.

[Nicholas stands looking up blankly. At last he turns, slowly stumbles down the ladder to the dock. As Nicholas is coming down, Joe, who has raised himself on his elbow, looks dazedly about. Nicholas comes to him.]

JOE. Oh, hello — say — wot —

NICHOLAS. Dot fella hit you vun awful crack.

JOE. Yeah — where is 'e now — huh?

BROTHERHOOD

NICHOLAS. He go on board. He get a zhob now.

JOE. Give us a—give us a hand will yu?
[*Nicholas helps him over to the string-piece, under the ladder, where he stretches out on the dock resting his head and shoulders on the string-piece.*]

JOE. Damn that guy Pittsburg! If I don' get him—

NICHOLAS. Yas, I know.

JOE. I'll get the union on 'im for it too. He ain't gonna get away with 'at sort o' stuff—not with me 'e ain't. He's too blame stuck on himself.

NICHOLAS. Yas—I tenk so.

JOE. You did n't get a job neither, did yu?

NICHOLAS. No.

JOE. That guy ain't fit to live.

NICHOLAS. I tenk maybe so.

JOE. Oh, we'll get 'im. Just wait. Just wait! There won't be enough o' that guy to sew up in canvas. [*The voices of Heiny and Pittsburg are heard nearing the head of the ladder.*]

HEINY [*in surprise*] Say Pittsboorg—

PITTS. What?

HEINY. Ain't you gonna take a yob on boord here?

PITTS. Ship on 'is madhouse? No, no.

HEINY. Pete and Goos and all, vee gonna take a yob.

PITTS. Go ahead. I ain't stoppin' you.

HEINY [*as Pittsburg begins to descend*] So long, Pittsboorg.

BROTHERHOOD

PITTS. So long, Heiny. See you sometime—maybe. [*Joe, as soon as he recognized Pittsburg's voice, first lowered his tone then ceased speaking entirely. When Pittsburg comes down the ladder, he slumps and tries to look as if he were badly injured. Pittsburg hardly looks at Joe. Stepping onto the dock he stops and half turns as if about to speak to Nicholas who has taken up a defensive position between him and Joe. He straightens without speaking and walks diagonally across the dock, stops once more, hesitates, then speaks roughly.*]

PITTS. Hey you—come 'ere! Come over here! [*Nicholas walks slowly up to him. Then as Pittsburg takes a step toward him, the Pole draws back suspiciously.*]

PITTS. Whatsa matter. Lissen here. I ain't goin' to ship on board. See? Savee?

NICHOLAS. Yas. Fell?

PITTS. She's got rotten grub, an' lousy bunks, an' a hell of an ol' man, an' a slave-driver for a mate—get me? An' she's so rusty she's falling apart—an' I would n' go a foot further from the dock on her for any amount.

NICHOLAS. Yas?

PITTS. [*aggravated and embarrassed*] Well—? [*Ferociously.*] If you want a job so bad why don't you go aboard an' get it then—stand here like a . . . [*He turns away suddenly.*]

NICHOLAS [*As Pittsburg turns back just before goin' off the dock*] You did n' take a zhob?

PITTS. You dumb—NO! I *did* 'n—you *do*! Get me?

BROTHERHOOD

NICHOLAS [*After an instant's thought*] Yas. I det you. [*He makes a movement in Pittsburg's direction. Pittsburg makes a deprecating motion with his hand and disappears. Nicholas goes to the ladder. As he is about to ascend Joe speaks.*]

JOE. Say — Yainhazz — gimme a hand a secon', will yu.

NICHOLAS. Yas, sure. [*He crosses to Joe.*] You tell me "don't vorry, you get a zhob"; dot's right, I do. [*Hauling Joe to his feet.*] You ain't hert bad? [*He turns away.*]

JOE. Nope, thanks. Say, you say you wanned somepn t' eat? Here take this.

NICHOLAS. O dank you — two dollar — danks. [*He puts it in his upper coat pocket. Joe approaches the foot of the ladder with Nicholas.*]

JOE. 'At's all right. Go buy yerself a good square-meal wid it — an' a little fur the fambly. Go ahead.

NICHOLAS. Danks, I do. Firs' I go on board an' get a zhob, hey.

JOE. Naw — yu don' needa. [*He steps up on the string-piece.*]

NICHOLAS. Yas, sure. I go get da zhob.

JOE. Say, who was here first, me or you.

NICHOLAS. You were, but —

JOE. Well — ? [*Nicholas attempts to go up the ladder but Joe blocks him.*]

JOE. Come on now — beat it home.

NICHOLAS [*struggling with all his feeble strength to pass him*] No, no!

JOE. Was n' I here first? Well, 'a firs' man here gets 'a job, see? Get out!

BROTHERHOOD

NICHOLAS [*striving futilely but desperately to get by*] You—got damn you. Dot fella—he say—I get da—zhob.

JOE. W-o-o-t-t-t? Get off before I trow y' off.

[*Nicholas grapples with him gouging, clawing, and biting like a wild-cat. Joe forces him to the string-piece, then, almost picking him up bodily throws him heavily down on the dock where he lies motionless. Joe starts to ascend the ladder. Remembering something, however, he returns to the prostrate man, reaches down and removes the bill from his coat pocket. He is smoothing it and folding it carefully with another bill as he disappears up the ladder.*]

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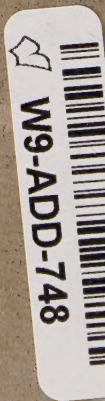
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